

Elias Tuller
O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N
SOAME JENYNS'S VIEW
OF THE
INTERNAL EVIDENCE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

A D D R E S S E D
TO ITS ALMOST-CHRISTIAN AUTHOR,

BY W. KENRICK, LL.D.

*I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this
day, were both almost and altogether, Christians.*

PAUL TO AGRIPPA.

L O N D O N:
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M D C C L X X V I.



TO
SOAME JENYNS, ESQ.

S I R,

APOLOGIES, for the liberties we take with individuals, when the interests of all mankind are at stake, are as frivolous as they are impertinent. I shall make none, therefore, for such as are taken in the following *Observations* on your late *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*.---The subject, indeed, is of such high debate, and its design of such superior dignity, that even the decency of decorum requires the banishment of unmeaning ceremony.---*St. Paul*, tho a prisoner and in bonds, stood upon none, even with *King Agrippa* on his judgment-seat; when, on the presumption of that princely personage's being *almost* a Christian, he wished that not only he, but all his hearers, were *altogether* such.

Whether my arguments are sufficiently forcible, or are properly calculated, to be in any degree instrumental to the accomplishment of a similar wish, must be determined by their influence on my readers ; among whom, I presume, Sir, you will be one of the most respectable. Whatever be the result, therefore, I shall add to the other liberties I have taken, that of congratulating you, who once confessedly *believed as little as others*, on the promising progress you have already made, in becoming *almost*, what I confidently trust you will, thro' superior influence, sooner or later, *altogether* be, a CHRISTIAN : as far as is consistent with which character,

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant,

W. KENRICK.

-ADVERTISEMENT.

THE extraordinary demand, for the *Appendix* to the third volume of the *London Review*, in which a *slight sketch* of the following *Observations* was first printed, having suggested to the author that their republication, in a more commodious form, would be acceptable to the Public, he was led to a more considerate revisal of the tract, which gave rise to them. The slips and inadvertencies, which appeared, on such revisal, to have escaped him in the hurry of composition, acquiring consequence from the importance of the subject, urged also a kind of necessity for such republication.

The desire of atoning, for the defects of that hasty critique, induced him, therefore, to enlarge on the more interesting parts of the *View*; and to digest the whole of his *Observations* on it, into a more methodical and regular form.

The *Observer* was the more readily induced to this, by an apparent deficiency of method in Mr. Jenyns's tract; though professedly calculated for the perusal of "the *Busy* and the *Idle*," who may be comprized under those who have but little time to read, and those who read but little at a time; for whose convenience, therefore, the matter is here so managed, by a proper subdivision of the subject, that the reader, be he as *busy* or as *idle* as he will, may take up or lay down the book at pleasure, without running any risk of losing, without recovery, the thread of its argument.

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 “ and many new precepts added, pecu-
 “ liarly corresponding with the new ob-
 “ ject of this religion.”—*This proposition*
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O B S E R-

OBSERVATIONS
ON A
VIEW OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

SECT. I.

*On the subject, scope, and design of the
writer's argument in general, viz.*

*"To prove the truth, by demon-
strating the divine origin of the
Christian Religion,"—The most
convincing proofs pretended to, amount
but to a mere probability.*

AMONG the many attempts, to
recommend and accommodate the pro-
found mysteries of *divine wisdom* to the
shallow comprehension of the *human
understanding*, the present is by no
means the least promising or plausible.

B

But

But the *Impossible*, necessarily includes the *Impracticable*, and all attempts, to reconcile objects, that are in their very essence irreconcilable, must ever be ineffectual.

In pride, in *reasoning* pride, our error lies ;
 All quit their sphere and rush into the skies :
 Aspiring to be gods if angels fell,
 Aspiring to be angels, men rebel.

Hence nothing can be more reprehensible, than the arrogance of our modern *Rationalists*, in cavilling at every thing in *Revelation*, that is not reconcilable to *Reason*, and in denying every thing to be *religious* that is not *rational*. Tenacious of the *name* of *Christians*, as they are of the *principles* of *Heathens*, they want to new-model the system of *Christianity*, by expunging all those doctrines, which they cannot reconcile to their new-fangled scheme of *Rationality*. But,
 alas !

alas ! their reasoning faculties are too confined, to soar above

—this visible, diurnal sphere ;
so that, after all, they must sit down content with a religion, which entitles them to no better an appellation than that of honest heathens, or give up even their *nominal* title to Christianity, and honestly confess themselves real *Infidels*.

Let them *chuse* ; but the time seems to be approaching when they must make their choice. The *Christian* world is no longer to be deceived by these wolves in sheep's cloathing ; these believers in the *name* of a *Saviour*, whose *power* of *salvation* they openly deny.

There is so much disingenuousness and sophistry in the practices of these *minute philosophers*, that we are particularly sorry to see them kept in countenance by the misapplied abilities of

more ingenious and ingenuous writers.

It has, indeed, been publicly hinted, that this little work is a mere controversial bubble, blown up to amuse well-meaning Christians, in order to impose on their credulity, and raise a sneer at the expence of their simplicity and sincerity.

For our own part, we have a better opinion of the author, than to give credit to such a suggestion. His rank and reputation in life, as well as in literature, forbid our entertaining a thought so derogatory to his character, as a man of sense, honour, and probity. For his *Christianity*, it is true, we have hitherto given him *credit*; but, as he now professes himself religiously solvent, we shall take the liberty of investigating the terms of payment, by a particular and impartial review of his present performance.

Before

Before we begin this investigation, however, it may not be amiss to enter a caveat, against the reader's giving credit to the argument merely on the authority of the writer. The good faith of the latter, respects himself alone, the validity of his reasoning only respects the reader.

Should his work, he says, ever have the honour to be admitted into such good company as the *busy* or the *idle*, they will immediately determine it to be that of some enthusiast or methodist, some beggar, or some madman.

"I shall, therefore," says he, "beg leave to assure them, that the author is very far removed from all these characters: that he *once perhaps* *believed as little as themselves,** but
"having

* This intimation of our author's, puts us in mind of old *Gresset*, one of the *beaux-esprits*,

“ having some leisure and more curio-
 “ sity, he employed them both in re-
 “ solving a question which seemed to
 “ him of some importance,—Whe-
 “ ther Christianity was really an im-
 “ posture founded on an absurd, incre-
 “ dible, and obsolete fable, as many
 “ suppose it? Or whether it is, what
 “ it pretends to be, a revelation com-
 “ municated to mankind by the in-
 “ terposition of supernatural power?
 “ On a candid enquiry, he soon found,
 “ that the first was an absolute impos-
 “ sibility, and that its pretensions to
 “ the

esprits, and, as he long affected to be thought
 the *esprits-forts* of France, having outlived
 his *passions*, and almost his *vanity*, (which is
 saying a great deal of a Frenchman) he re-
 tired in disgust to a monastery, and turned
 enthusiast; alledging, as the strongest proof
 of the propriety of his new creed, the im-
 propriety of his former infidelity.—

“ the latter were founded on the most
 “ solid grounds : In the further pur-
 “ suit of his examination, he perceived,
 “ at every step, new lights arising, and
 “ some of the brightest from parts of
 “ it the most obscure, but productive
 “ of the clearest proofs, because equally
 “ beyond the power of human artifice
 “ to invent, and human reason to dis-
 “ cover.”

That the *brightest lights* and *clearest*
proofs should arise from the *most obscure*
 parts of scripture, is as singular as is
 the reason given for it; viz. “ be-
 “ cause they are beyond the power of
 “ human artifice to invent, and human
 “ reason to discover.” But, may we
 not ask here, how our author could as-
 sign so notable a reason, without hav-
 ing himself, carried human *artifice* and
 human *reason* to their utmost extent
 of *discovery* and *invention* ? How else

should he find this discovery and invention to be an *absolute impossibility*? —If, indeed, he meant to insinuate that he hath carried the powers of investigation so far as *this*; well and good! The improvements of *art*, the *progress* of *science*, are at an end! — But we must have stronger proof of the fact than a mere *ipse-dixit*, in a matter of so much importance.

That it is of consequence to the reader to know, that the author is not an *enthusiast* or a *madman*, we admit; but why we are told he is not a *methodist* or a *beggar* we do not readily conceive. Is any doctrine the less true because it is taught by a *methodist*? Is any argument the less valid because it is urged by a *beggar*? Or would the same doctrine be more true if maintained by a *metropolitan*? Or the same argument more valid if urged by

by a Nabob ? —Our Saviour and his apostles were men of eminence neither in church nor state. They were neither high-priests nor lords of trade; neither men of credit nor men of fortune. Nor do we see any incongruity in a very credible man's being a methodist and a very sound reasoner's being as poor as Job.

It is more to the purpose that we are told, the author is *not* an *enthusiast* or a madman. But who tells us this ?—The very man himself.—And who ever took a man's own word for his not being in a state of insanity or intoxication ?—"I drunk !" says drunken Cassio in the play, "No, Sir,—
"This is my right hand and this is
"my left"—at the same time mistaking one for the other.

We do not say, this is actually the case with our author; but, we say,

that his own asseveration merely cannot be admitted as evidence to the contrary. From his own confession it appears, he is a convert from *infidelity*: now all converts are apt to run into extremes and from excess of incredulity to become too credulous. From doubting and disbelieving what is probably true, they affect to believe what is palpably false. Nay, from denying almost every thing, they come really to believe almost any thing.

New Converts, we say, are apt, thro' inordinate zeal, to give into excess of credulity: a conduct, which, however pious, certainly borders on Enthusiasm. Indeed, we cannot help thinking our author betrays a *little tincture* of it in his paradoxical observation, respecting Divine Revelation in general; when, he says, all circumstances considered, " if it were in eve-
 " ry

“ ry part *familiar* to our *understandings*,
 “ and *consonant* to our *reason*, we should
 “ have great cause to suspect its *divine*
 “ *authority* ; and, therefore, had this
 “ revelation been *less incomprehensible*, it
 “ would certainly have been *more in-*
 “ *credible*.”—That is, in plainer terms,
 “ If we *understood* it *more*, we should
 “ be apt to *believe* it *less*.”—Is not this
 on the plan of *Credo quia impossibile est* ?
 [I believe it because it is impossible.]

And does our author give this, as a
 proof that he is in *no degree*, touched
 with *enthusiasm* or *insanity* ?——*Credat*
Judæus Appella !—We say not *haud nos*,
 because *Charity*, though it *feareth* all
 things, *hopeth* all things.

“ To prove the truth of the Chri-
 “ stian religion,” says he, “ we should
 “ begin by shewing the *internal marks*
 “ of Divinity, which are *stamped upon*

“ it †, because on *this* the credibility
 “ of the prophecies and miracles in a
 “ *great measure* depends : for if we
 have once *reason to be convinced* that
 “ this religion is derived from a su-
 “ pernatural origin ; prophecies and
 “ miracles will become so far from
 “ being incredible, that it will be
 “ *highly probable*, that a supernatural
 “ revelation should be foretold, and
 “ enforced by supernatural means.”

Not that our author professedly
 means to depreciate the proofs of the
 truth of the Christian religion arising
 from either *prophecies* or *miracles*. They
 both, have, or ought to have, he
 says, their proper weight. Let us
 weigh them then in his own ballance.

“ *Prophecies*, he says, are *permanent*
 “ *miracles*, whose authority is sufficiently
 “ confirmed

† Should not a stamp *upon* a thing be
 rather called an *external* than *internal* mark ?

“ confirmed by their completion, and
 “ are therefore solid proofs of the su-
 “ pernatural origin of a religion, whose
 “ truth they were intended to justify ;
 “ such are those to be found in vari-
 “ ous parts of the scriptures relative to
 “ the coming of the Messiah, the de-
 “ struction of Jerusalem, and the unex-
 “ ampled state in which the Jews have
 “ ever since continued, all so circum-
 “ stantially descriptive of the events,
 “ that they seem rather histories of
 “ past, than predictions of future trans-
 “ actions ; and whoever will seriously
 “ consider the immense distance of
 “ time between some of them and the
 “ events which they foretell, the un-
 “ interrupted chain by which they are
 “ connected for many thousand years,
 “ how exactly they correspond with
 “ those events, and how totally unap-
 “ plicable they are to all others in the
 history

“ history of mankind; I say, whoever
 “ considers these circumstances, he
 “ will scarcely be persuaded to believe,
 “ that they can be the productions of
 “ preceding artifice, or posterior ap-
 “ plication, or can entertain the least
 “ doubt of their being derived from
 “ supernatural inspiration.”

Now, this is so far from being true,
 that we ourselves, and we dare say
 many others, have seriously considered
 all these circumstances; and, notwith-
 standing the pains ingenious interpre-
 ters have taken to develope, conciliate
 and harmonize them, we do still look
 upon them (taken in a mere *rational*
view) to be so imperfectly ascertained
 and so doubtfully applied that, judg-
 ing of them merely from reason, they
 do not strike us with any thing like
 that force of conviction which they ap-
 pear to carry with our author.

As

As to the miracles, recorded in the New Testament to have been performed by Christ and his apostles, he says, "they were certainly convincing proofs of their divine commission to those who saw them; and as they were seen by such numbers, and are as well attested, as other historical facts, and above all, as they were wrought on so great and so wonderful an occasion, they must still be admitted as evidence of no inconsiderable force."

Here again this writer either equivocates or sins against the truth. The miracles performed by Christ and his Apostles were *not* certainly convincing proofs of their divine mission to *many* of those who saw them. Witness our Saviour's dreadful denunciation to whole cities of impenitent unbelievers, to Choraizin, Bethsaida and Capernaum;
in

in which his mighty works had been displayed : unless, indeed, we are to suppose their *impenitency* not the consequence of their *unbelief* ; but that they were so much worse than the devils, who believe and tremble, in that *they* believed and trembled not. But, with the Scribes and Pharisees ; who, seeing him work miracles, immediately consulted to destroy him and said, he cast out devils, through *Beelzebub*, the prince of devils ; were those miracles, we say, convincing proofs of his *divine* mission to *them* ?

It even appears that our Saviour wrought his miracles and preached his doctrines, in the sight and hearing of many who were never intended to be convinced by them. This our author himself observes, in accounting for that
 “ want of irresistible evidence of their
 “ truth, by which they *might* possibly
 “ have

“ have been enforced :” quoting from the Evangelist Mark the following declaration of Jesus to his disciples. “ To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God ; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand ; and lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

What weight or degree of force, then, doth our author give to the evidence of miracles ? Surely, no considerable weight, if he thinks, as he says that “ they must now depend, for “ *much* of their credibility, on the “ truth of that religion whose credi-
 bility they were at first intended to “ support.”

How!

How! are the *religion* and the *miracles* to be made reciprocally the criterion of each other? Are the pillars of support, on which the truth of Christianity hath so long rested, to be now themselves supported by the strength and symmetry of its superstructure? This is making the whole hang by *Geometry* indeed!—

The internal marks of the divine origin of Christianity, are to give a credibility to the prophecies and miracles; which *they*, in turn are to reflect back on Christianity, to do credit to its divine origin. If this be not reasoning in a circle, and beating round the bush of argument to no end, we, at least, see no end to such a mode of argument. It is like that of the world's being supported by an elephant, the elephant by a tortoise, the tortoise

tortoise by another elephant, and the other elephant by another world !

In regard to the prediction of prophecies and the working of miracles, it may indeed be justly objected, as it has often been, that the completion of a prophecy or the performance of a miracle, taken merely as a fact, however wonderful, does not necessarily infer the interposition of a *supernatural* agent. *

But

* Think not, Lorenzo, Nature strays
 Whene'er the world is in amaze :
 For, say that miracles there be,
 May'nt they be only such to thee ?
 So many links conceal'd remain,
 Which form the complicated chain,
 True causes and effects between,
 In Nature's providential scene !

EP. TO LORENZO.

We shall take the liberty, in the course of this critique, to refer the reader more than
 once

But, granting that it did, and that such completion of the prophecies and performance of miracles are as well attested as other historical facts. Such attestation they may have; and yet, if they have no more, they cannot lay claim to more than a mere moral probability of truth.

The difficulty of ascertaining the truth of probable and ordinary facts, which happen daily almost under our immediate observation, is so notorious, that it is a sufficient caution against the putting implicit faith in the historical relation

once to the *Epistles to Lorenzo*; not to indulge the vanity of an author in quoting from himself, but to shew that the critick is *no new convert*; being much of the same opinion respecting these matters, after upwards of twenty years expence and reflection, as he was of, so long ago, and at a very early period of life.

relation of facts improbable and extraordinary, which are said to have happened at such a considerable distance of time and place.

The weight or degree of force, therefore, which our author gives to the evidence of prophecies, must, notwithstanding he styles it *not inconsiderable*, be little worth consideration.

The utmost that he proposes indeed, is, a *high* probability; and even this depends on our having other *reasons* to be convinced that Christianity is of divine origin. A foundation itself far short of the necessary proof in some cases; for men may often have reason to believe what is, nevertheless, not actually true.

Even the *internal evidence*, this writer attempts to investigate, appears hence to amount to a mere *probability*; so that, by adding *this* evidence to
those

those of both prophecies and miracles, he is at best only adding one probability to another.

SECT. II.

On the definition of the subject, and division of the argument into four propositions.—The first “That there is now extant a book entitled the New Testament,” *shewn to be futile and frivolous.*

“WHAT pure Christianity is (says
 “this writer) divested of all its or-
 “naments, appendages, and corrup-
 “tion, I pretend not to say ; but what
 “it is not, will venture to affirm, which
 “is, that it is not the offspring of fraud
 “or fiction : that however fraud and
 “fiction may have grown up with it,
 “yet it never could have been grafted
 “on

“ on the same stock, nor planted by
 “ the same hand.”

This our author undertakes to shew
 by stating the following plain and, as
 he styles them, *undeniable** propositions.

“ First, that there is now extant a
 “ book intituled the New Testament.

“ Secondly, that from this book
 “ may be extracted a system of religion
 “ intirely new, both with regard to
 “ the object and the doctrines, not
 “ only infinitely superior to, but un-
 “ like every thing, which had ever be-
 “ fore entered into the mind of man.

“ Thirdly, that from this book may
 “ likewise be collected a system of
 “ ethics, in which every moral pre-
 “ cept founded on reason is carried to
 “ a higher degree of purity and per-
 “ fection, than in any other of the
 “ wisest

* But if *undeniable*, why all this trouble
 to state and explain them ?

“ wisest philosophers of preceding
 “ ages ; every moral precept founded
 “ on false principles is totally omitted,
 “ and many new precepts added pecu-
 “ liarly corresponding with the new
 “ object of this religion.

“ Lastly, that such a system of re-
 “ ligion and morality could not pos-
 “ sibly have been the work of any man,
 “ or set of men ; much less of those
 “ obscure, ignorant, and illiterate per-
 “ sons, who actually did discover, and
 “ publish it to the world ; and that
 “ therefore it must undoubtedly have
 “ been effected by the interposition of
 “ divine power, that is, that it must
 “ derive its origin from God.”

Such is this writer’s plan, as exhi-
 bited by himself ; on which we beg
 leave first to observe that, the terms,
 in which it is laid down, are too vague
 and the style too metaphorical for a
 logical

logical essay; the form of which it affects to assume.

One would imagine that a casuist, so rigid as to think it necessary to offer “the mere existence of a book entitled “the New Testament,” as a formal proposition, would have been strict enough to set out with as formal a definition of the enthymeme, or object itself in contemplation.

The design in view is professedly “to prove the truth of the Christian “religion,” and yet “what pure christianity is, divested of all its ornaments, appendages and corruption, “the writer will not pretend to say.”

Does our logician then predicate nothing of his subject?—Yes, though he will not pretend to say *what* pure christianity *is*, he will venture to affirm *what* it *is not*. His affirmation, however is not even a negative predicate

C

of

of its essence or property, but an assertion relative to its derivation "it is not the *offspring* of fraud or fiction." — "Fraud and fiction may have grown up with it, yet it never could have been grafted upon the same stock, nor planted by the same hand." — These metaphorical expressions, we say, are ill adapted to the subject in hand; which requires simple, unequivocating and precise terms, not liable to misconception or mistake. We cannot help thinking it, also, extremely illogical to undertake to prove what any thing may be imputed to, as its cause, without being able to give some definition of the thing itself, as an effect. To affirm positively *what* and shew *whence* it is *not derived*, without pretending to know what *it is*, is certainly not a very philosophical, however

however popular, mode it may be of theological controversy.

But to accommodate our *Review* to the *view* itself. As to this proposition the *first*, very little, as the author hints, need be said. It is a plain fact, which cannot be denied, such writings do now exist : the less need, therefore, as before observed, to give it the formality of a proposition, either to be proved or granted ; we pass it over therefore as futile and frivolous.

S E C T. III.

*On the second proposition, viz. “ That
 “ from this book may be extracted
 “ a system of religion entirely new,
 “ both with regard to the object
 “ and the doctrines, not only superior to, but unlike every thing,
 “ which had ever before entered the*

“ human mind,”—*This proposition shewn to be very obscurely illustrated, inconsistently explained, and even of little consequence to the general argument, were it capable of being proved.*

“ MY *second* proposition, says our
 “ author, is not quite so simple, but, I
 “ think, not less undeniable than the
 “ former, and is this : that from this
 “ book may be extracted a system of
 “ religion entirely new, both with re-
 “ gard to the object, and the doctrines,
 “ not only infinitely superior to, but
 “ totally unlike every thing, which
 “ had ever before entered into the mind
 “ of man : I say extracted, because
 “ all the doctrines of this religion ha-
 “ ving been delivered at various times,
 “ and on various occasions, and here
 “ *only historically recorded*, no uniform
 “ or regular system of theology is here
 “ to

“ to be found ; and better perhaps it
 “ had been, if less labour had been
 “ employed by the learned, to bend
 “ and twist these divine materials in-
 “ to the polished forms of human sys-
 “ tems, to which they never will sub-
 “ mit, and for which they were never
 “ intended by their Great Author.
 “ Why he chose not to leave any such
 “ behind him we know not, but it
 “ might possibly be, because he knew
 “ that the imperfection of man was
 “ incapable of receiving such a system,
 “ and that we are more properly, and
 “ more safely conducted by the distant,
 “ and scattered rays, than by the too
 “ powerful sunshine of divine illumi-
 “ nation.”

Our author expresses himself here,
 also, in terms very vague and equivocal.
 “ A system of religion, he says,
 “ may be extracted from the New

“ Testament infinitely superior [*superior in what respect?*] to every other;
 “ and yet no uniform or regular system
 “ of theology is to be found there;
 “ and it had been better perhaps if the
 “ learned had never attempted to form
 “ such systems; being *probably* incom-
 “ patible with the divine œconomy
 “ respecting mankind.”

Here is a *probability* suggested that
 is very *high* indeed! He might almost
 as well have suggested that the divine
 œconomy itself is not systematical.

Equally paradoxical with a *former*
 illustration * also is the *present*. As,
 before, the *brightest lights* arose from
 the most *obscure* parts of revelation, so
 here we are to be more safely conduct-
 ed in the *dark*, than we should be in
 the *brightest sunshine* of divine illumi-
 nation!

*See page 7.

There is likewise a palpable inconsistency on the very face of the proposition itself. How can a system of religion be extracted from a book, in which no such system is to be found? —Or means our author only that the *form* of that system is not to be found there? But, what of that? Every doctrine that is *found* must be *systematical*, whether the declaration or explanation of it be formally so or not.

It is customary for writers, either from literary incapacity, or to save themselves trouble, to deliver their sentiments, however consistent and connected with each other, in a loose, unconnected and desultory manner. Historians * in particular, must, from

C 4

the

* Now, I readily acknowledge, says our author, that the Scriptures are *not revelations* from God; but the *history* of them. See *View*, page 123.

the very nature of their composition, blend doctrinal precepts with practical narration. But, if the precepts, thus interspersed in the course of the narrative, are inconsistent in themselves, or incompatible with each other, they can neither be truly doctrinal nor doctrinally true.

Men may *write* as loosely and desultorily as they please ; but, if they *think* justly they must think consistently, and, of course, systematically. Nor do we see the least reason (except that of our author's desire to accommodate things, at any rate, to his own system) for supposing that mankind are, through any imperfection more incapable of receiving doctrines in a systematical form than they are of receiving them in no form at all. As good a logician and as good a Christian as our author,

author, tells us "the best way to learn
 "any science is to begin with a *system*." *

As to this author's metaphorical allusion to the rays of light, it elucidates nothing. That a moderate portion of light is better adapted to weak optics than an excessive blaze of it, is undoubtedly true; but the supposition, thence deduced, of our seeing better by means of distant, scattered rays, than by a regular emanation, is a rhetorical flourish altogether inconsistent with sound logic and true philosophy.

In regard to the bending and twisting of the materials of divine revelation "into the *polished* forms of human systems, to which they never
 "will submit;" the attempt so to twist and bend them is certainly an unjustifiable violence, which it might have been better the learned had never made: but this is no reasonable ob-

C 5

jection

* The late Dr. Watts.

jection to their forming a plain, *unpolished* system ; such as is really contained in the Scriptures.

Whether any *system* of scriptural *thinking* already reduced to *form* in *writing*, be in all respects unexceptionable, it is not our business here to enquire. But if there be not, it is in this particular we trace the source of imperfection : it lies in the incapacity of men to form such a divine system, to connect detached and desultory doctrines into a regular and consistent theory ; and not to their incapacity of comprehending such a theory, had it been formally digested and in such form first given them.

In respect to the total *novelty* and unheard of singularity of the doctrines of revelation when first promulgated, our author *affirms* that those doctrines are equally “ new with the object ; and
“ contain

“ contain ideas of God, and of man,
 “ of the present, and of a future life;
 “ and of the relations which all these
 “ bear to each other totally unheard of
 “ and quite dissimilar from any which
 “ had ever been thought on, previous
 “ to its publication.”

“ But,” continues he, “ Whether
 “ these wonderful doctrines (which he
 “ enumerates) are worthy of our belief
 “ must depend on the opinion, which
 “ we entertain of the authority of those
 “ who published them to the world;
 “ certain it is, that they are all so far
 “ removed from every tract of the hu-
 “ man imagination, that it seems e-
 “ qually impossible, that they should
 “ ever have been derived from the
 “ knowledge or artifice of man.”

Now to *us* there *seems* no such im-
 possibility. Even granting, in oppo-
 sition to the Son of Wisdom, that there

is any thing new under the sun, and that there is nothing in the tract entitled “ Christianity as old as the creation ;” admitting, we say, that the Christian religion, when promulgated by our Saviour, was as *new* and *strange* as our author represents it, we think little stress of argument is to be laid upon such singularity or novelty.

We shall not go about to enquire whether the extravagancies of the Pagan Mythology, many of which certainly bear *some* resemblance to the sublime mysteries of Christianity, were of later or earlier origin. Yet, wonderful as are the latter and firmly as we believe them derived from God, being in their *execution* superior to human comprehension, and totally incompatible with human reason ; we do not see any thing, merely in the *idea* or *design* of the sublimest of them, so far superior to the powers

powers of human invention or dissimilar to its sublimer conceptions. On the contrary, man hath made to himself so many inventions, human genius hath soared so high into the region of impossibilities, that nothing which can come within the association of the most incongruous ideas, can in our opinion be justly said to exceed the artifice of the human imagination *.

To

* And yet this appears to be all the *superiority* suggested, “ Both the object and the “ doctrines,” says the author, “ are not “ only infinitely superior to, but totally unlike every thing, which had ever before “ *entered into the mind* of man.” And again, “ the doctrines of this religion contain ideas &c. quite dissimilar from any “ which had ever been *thought on*, previous to its publication.”—Thus it appears to be in the *thought* and not in the *deed* of the mystery

To attend, however, a little to the author's mode of proving his proposition. "To say the truth, says he, before the appearance of Christianity there existed *nothing like religion* on the face of the earth; the Jewish only excepted: all other nations were immersed in the grossest idolatry."

"At this time Christianity broke
 "forth from the east like a rising sun,
 "and dispelled this universal darkness,
 "which obscured every part of the
 "globe, and even at this day prevails
 "in all those remoter regions, to which
 "its salutary influence has not as yet
 "extended. From all those which it
 "has reached, it has, notwithstanding
 "its corruptions, banished all those e-
 "normities, and introduced a more ra-
 "tional,

mystery of salvation, that, according to this writer, the superiority, contended for, consists.

“ tional devotion, and purer morals :
 “ It has taught men the unity, and at-
 “ tributes of the supreme Being, the
 “ remission of sins, the resurrection of
 “ the dead, life everlasting, and the
 “ kingdom of heaven ; doctrines as in-
 “ conceivable to the wisest of mankind
 “ antecedent to its appearance, as the
 “ Newtonian system is at this day to
 “ the most ignorant tribes of savages
 “ in the wilds of America : doctrines,
 “ which human reason never could
 “ have discovered, but, which when dis-
 “ covered, coincide with, and are con-
 “ firmed by it ; and which, though
 “ beyond the reach of all the learning
 “ and penetration of Plato, Aristotle,
 “ and Cicero, are now clearly laid
 “ open to the eye of every peasant and
 “ mechanic with the Bible in his hand.
 “ These are all plain facts too glaring
 “ to

“ to be contradicted, and therefore,
 “ whatever we may think of the au-
 “ thority of these books, the rela-
 “ tions which they contain, or the in-
 “ spiration of their authors, of these
 “ facts, no man, who has eyes to read,
 “ or ears to hear, can entertain a
 “ doubt ; because there are the books,
 “ and in them there is this religion.”

Doubtless all this is well said. It is
 pity it is not all quite so true. But the
 truth is, that these plain facts which
 our author says are too glaring to be
 contradicted, are glaringly contradic-
 ted every day.—It is not only denied
 that the doctrines of the Christian faith
coincide with, and are *confirmed*, by *reason*,
 but it is denied by many that the *devo-*
tion actually introduced by Christianity is
more rational or the *morals purer* than those
 professed and practised by some peo-
 ple

ple who never heard of Christianity*.

We

* If we believe *modern* history, (for which we have certainly as good authority as for the ancient) there have been found *savage* nations (if so we may call them) whose simplicity and purity both of religion and morals have been remarkable.

The plain *Peruvian*, pure in heart,
Strange to the guile and guilt of *art*,
Unaw'd by tenet, text or tale,
Erects his temple in the vale,
Sacred to th' universal mind,
The guardian-God of human-kind!

No firslings here affront the skies,
No clouds of smoaking incense rise;
No hypocrite with doubtful face,
No convert, tortur'd into grace,
No solid skull, in wisdom's cowl,
No hooded hawk, nor solemn owl,
Nor blind nor ominous invade
This spotless consecrated shade:
But, like the native of the spray,
Man hails his Maker, with the day;
By nature taught, Heav'n asks no more,
In *spirit* and in *truth* adore!

EP. TO LOR.

We urge nothing against the purity of those morals now in practice throughout Christendom, nor compare them with those of other nations now existing, who have not embraced Christianity.—The comparison might be looked upon as too severe a libel on the good Christians of the age ! But might not an able casuist, and as good a rhetorician as our author, as plausibly declaim in favour of the conquerors, legislators, and moralists of unenlightened paganism, to the shame of the immorality of professed Christians.

Might he not exhibit a picture of horror, faithfully drawn from the history of Christianity and the propagation of our holy religion, still more shocking to humanity, and contradictory to its divine precepts, than is afforded

forded from that of the most horrid æra in the annals of heathenism?

Hath the savage fury of hostile barbarians, the avarice of insatiable tyrants, or the boundless ambition of *heathen* conquerors been the cause of more blood-shed or greater cruelty, than the zeal of religious fanatics, the phrenzy of pious enthusiasm, or the pride and avarice of *Christian* priests?

Might not an artful declaimer, we say, very reasonably pretend that a religion, whose professors have been guilty of so much wickedness, could not possibly merit the epithets of *divine* or holy? Would he not rather derive it from Hell, as its most natural source, than from Heaven, the declared fountain of mercy and goodness?

Declamations of this kind, prove nothing.

We

We shall proceed, therefore, to the consideration of the author's *third* proposition; leaving that of his farther *proof* of the *second*, till we come to his solving of objections; where indeed, much of it would have with more propriety found a place.

SECT. IV.

On the third proposition. “ That from
 “ this book may likewise be collected
 “ a system of Ethicks, in which
 “ every moral precept, founded on
 “ reason, is carried to a higher degree
 “ of perfection, than in any
 “ other of the wisest philosophers
 “ of preceding ages; every precept
 “ founded on false principles is totally
 “ omitted, and many new precepts
 “ added, peculiarly corresponding
 “ with the new object of this
 “ religion

“ religion.”—This proposition shewn to be very exceptionably illustrated; affording at best rather a proof of the sublimity and purity of Christian morals, and of the advantages, rather than the truth, of the Christian Religion.

IN proof of this *third* proposition, our author begins by making a distinction, between the moral precepts of Christianity (founded, as he observes, on reason) and those precepts, which, being founded on false principles, inculcate in fact no virtues at all. Under the former he includes piety to God, benevolence to man, justice, charity, temperance and sobriety, with all those which prohibit the contrary vices, and all that debase our natures, and, by mutual injuries, introduce universal disorder, and consequently universal misery. Under the latter he

classes

classes those fictitious virtues, which, he says, produce no salutary effects; and however admired, are no virtues at all, such as *Valour, Patriotism* and *Friendship*.

The *Monthly* Reviewers, in their critique on our author's work, observe, on this distinction, that they "never conceived that the virtues of "*friendship, fortitude, and patriotism*, do "not form a part of the *moral system* "of the *gospel*: much less could they "have urged the want of these virtues as a peculiar recommendation "of its excellence. They are conspicuously illustrated," say they, "in "the character of its author, and it "would be easy to produce striking "instances in which his courage and "friendship, and concern for the welfare of his country, were actually "displayed. But this is needless; the "advocates

“ advocates of the Christian religion,
 “ in answer to Lord Shaftesbury and
 “ others, have sufficiently vindicated it
 “ in this respect. *These* are unquestion-
 “ ably virtues of considerable impor-
 “ tance ; and so far as they do not in-
 “ terfere with the general principles of
 “ benevolence which Christianity in-
 “ culcates, they constitute a part of
 “ *Christian* morality.”

It is well for these distinguishing cri-
 tics that they bring in the *salvo*, at the
 at the close of the above paragraph,
 respecting these popular virtues *not in-*
terfering with the general principles of
 benevolence, which Christianity incul-
 cates.

This is the very point in question ;
 and, however successfully the advocates
 for Christianity may have combated
 Shaftesbury and others, there is some
 room

room still left for opposing our author's argument.

“ *Valour*, says he, for instance, or
 “ active courage, is for the most part
 “ constitutional, and therefore can have
 “ no more claim to moral merit, than
 “ wit, beauty, health, strength, or
 “ any other endowment of the mind
 “ or body; and so far is it from pro-
 “ ducing any salutary effects by intro-
 “ ducing peace, order, or happiness
 “ into society, that it is the usual per-
 “ petrator of all the violences, which
 “ from retaliated injuries distract the
 “ world with bloodshed and devasta-
 “ tion. It is the engine by which the
 “ strong are enabled to plunder the
 “ weak, the proud to trample upon
 “ the humble, and the guilty to op-
 “ press the innocent; it is the chief
 “ instrument which Ambition em-
 “ ploys in her unjust pursuits of wealth
 “ and

“ and power, and is therefore so much
 “ extolled by her votaries : it was in-
 “ deed congenial with the religion of
 “ pagans, whose gods were for the
 “ most part made out of deceased he-
 “ roes, exalted to heaven as a reward
 “ for the mischiefs which they had per-
 “ petrated upon earth, and therefore
 “ with them this was the first of vir-
 “ tues, and had even engrossed that
 “ denomination to itself ; but, what-
 “ ever merit it may have assumed a-
 “ mong pagans, with Christians it can
 “ pretend to none.”

There would be some argument in
 all this, if, because valour be the *oc-*
casional instrument of oppression, it be
 also the *necessary cause* of it ; or if men
 were always *mischievous* in proportion
 as they are *bold*. But we presume that
 this is not the case ; *cruelty* being
characteristic of cowardice, and bene-

D

volence

volence of bravery. Personal valour may, therefore, be justly esteemed to have some moral merit ; although, as it is allowed to be in a great degree constitutional, it is certainly no farther to be deemed a moral virtue, than it is to be personally acquired. For a virtue, notwithstanding the plausibility of our author's reasoning, we presume it may justly be stiled.

Our author, indeed, says, that few, or none are the occasions in which Christians are permitted to exert their courage or valour. " They are so far," says he, " from being allowed to inflict evil, " that they are forbid even to resist it ; " they are so far from being encouraged " to revenge injuries, that one of their " first duties is to forgive them ; so far " from being incited to destroy their " enemies, that they are commanded " to

“ to love them, and to serve them to
 “ the utmost of their power.”

Surely our author here mistakes the nature of *that evil* which Christians are forbid to resist. It certainly is not the moral evil of *injustice* ! Admitting they are not to *revenge* injuries, surely they may exert their valour to *prevent* the execution of them ! If not, a good Christian must not resist the violence of a robber, a house-breaker, or a murderer !

But, granting that individuals, anxious to copy after Christian perfection, are justified in thus *submitting* to (though it be in fact *conniving* at) the commission of acts of injustice ; valour may be yet a necessary virtue to the support and defence of Christian communities ; as we shall shew, when we come to treat of *Patriotism*.

But though our author will not ad-

mit *active courage* to be a real virtue ; *passive courage*, or fortitude, he allows to be consistent with the purest Christian morality.

“ Passive courage, says he, is frequently, and properly inculcated by this meek and suffering religion, under the titles of patience and resignation : a real and substantial virtue this, and a direct contrast to the former ; for passive courage arises from the noblest dispositions of the human mind, from a contempt of misfortunes, pain, and death, and a confidence in the protection of the Almighty ; active from the meanest : from passion, vanity, and self-dependence : passive courage is derived from a zeal for truth, and a perseverance in duty ; active is the offspring of pride and revenge, and the parent of cruelty and injustice : in short, passive

“passive courage is the resolution of a
 “philosopher, active the ferocity of a
 “savage. Nor is this more incompat-
 “tible with the precepts, than with
 “the object of this religion, which is
 “the attainment of the kingdom of hea-
 “ven; for valour is not that sort of
 “violence, by which that kingdom
 “is to be taken; nor are the turbu-
 “lent spirits of heroes and conquerors
 “admissible into those regions of peace,
 “subordination, and tranquility.”

This is, on the whole, well said; though we cannot agree that valour or active courage is always the offspring of pride and revenge, or the parent of cruelty and injustice.—Passive courage may, also, be justly stiled the *resolution* of a *philosopher*, and yet active courage be very unjustly called the *ferocity* of a *savage*. Not but that the activity of

some men is fierce and ferocious, as the passiveness of others is tame and irresolute.

On *Patriotism* our author declaims thus :

“ *Patriotism*, that celebrated virtue
 “ so much practised in ancient, and
 “ so much professed in modern times,
 “ that virtue, which so long preserved
 “ the liberties of Greece, and exalted
 “ Rome to the empire of the world :
 “ this celebrated virtue, I say, must
 “ also be excluded ; because it not
 “ only falls short of, but directly
 “ counteracts, the extensive benevo-
 “ lence of this religion. A Christian
 “ is of no country, he is a citizen of
 “ the world ; and his neighbours and
 “ countrymen are the inhabitants
 “ of the remotest regions, whenever
 “ their distresses demand his friendly
 “ assistance : Christianity commands
 “ us

" us to love all mankind, Patriotism
 " to oppress all other countries to ad-
 " vance the imaginary prosperity of
 " our own : Christianity enjoins to
 " imitate the universal benevolence of
 " our Creator, who pours forth his
 " blessings on every nation upon
 " earth ; Patriotism to copy the mean
 " partiality of an English parish-offi-
 " cer, who thinks injustice and cruelty
 " meritorious, whenever they pro-
 " mote the interests of his own incon-
 " siderable village. This has ever been
 " a favourite virtue with mankind, be-
 " cause it conceals self-interest under
 " the mask of public spirit, not only
 " from others, but even from them-
 " selves, and gives a licence to inflict
 " wrongs and injuries not only with
 " impunity, but with applause ; but
 " it is so diametrically opposite to the
 " great characteristic of this institu-
 " tion,

tion, that it never could have been admitted into the list of Christian virtues.

Without recurring to what other writers may have advanced in favour of the Christianity of patriotism, we shall offer a few reasons, that suggest themselves to us, to shew that the love of one's self and one's country, is not so inconsistent with that universal philanthropy inculcated by Christianity, as this writer here supposes.

True self-love and social, says the Poet, are one and the same.

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake,
Still from the central point the circle spreads;
And wider grows as still the next succeeds;
Thus father, brother, friend we *first* embrace,
Our country *next*, *next* all the human race *.

* Rousseau somewhere observes that the universal philanthropy of those cosmopolites
who

What philosophy there is in this poetry will appear in the course of our argument.

To the judicious omission of these false virtues, *Valour, Patriotism, and Friendship*, our author says, “ We may add that remarkable silence, “ which the Christian legislator *every* “ *where* preserves on subjects, esteemed “ by all others of the highest importance, civil government, rational policy, and the rights of war and “ peace ; of these he has *not taken the* “ *least notice* ; probably for this plain “ reason, because it would have been

D 5 “ impossible

who have neither love for their relations, friendship for their neighbours nor partiality for their country, is justly to be suspected ; even as he who has no love for himself can hardly be supposed to love *all* mankind. And yet Rousseau was a warm advocate for the purity of the Christian morality.

“ impossible to have formed any expli-
 “ cit regulations concerning them,
 “ which must not have been incon-
 “ sistent with the purity of his reli-
 “ gion, or with the practical obser-
 “ vance of such imperfect creatures as
 “ men ruling over and contending with
 “ each other : For instance, had he *ab-*
 “ *solutely forbid all resistance to the reign-*
 “ *ing powers*, he had constituted a plan
 “ of despotism, and made men slaves ;
 “ had he *allowed it*, he must have au-
 “ thorised disobedience and made
 “ them rebels : had he in direct terms
 “ prohibited all war, he must have left
 “ his followers for ever an easy prey to
 “ every infidel invader ; had he per-
 “ mitted it, he must have licensed all
 “ that rapine and murder, with which
 “ it is unavoidably attended.”

Now, not to dwell on the impropriety
 in the last sentence of charging the
 power,

power, permitting war, with the licensing of all the rapine and murder attending it; we object to the matter of fact, as stated in the whole passage.

Without insisting, with the *Monthly Reviewers*, that the character of our *Saviour* was *conspicuously illustrious* as a *patriot*, we may safely deny that *he has not taken the least notice* of matters of patriotism and civil polity, as our author asserts. His reply to the Pharisees, who tempted him on the subject of paying tribute—"Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are of God"—is an irrefragable instance of the distinction he made between religion and politics.

Civil government, national policy, and the rights of war and peace, were subjects, indeed, that appear not to have come directly under his decision.

Had they so done, we have no reason to think our Saviour lay under any kind of *impossibility*, to give a very explicit and satisfactory answer.

If he was not explicit, however, in *precept*, respecting the authority of civil government, it must be admitted he was illustriously so in *example*, by his submission to the forms of judiciary trial and juridical condemnation ; which surely were not *necessary* to his death, if, no such example was intended to be given, or precept thence to be inculcated !

But had our Saviour himself given neither precept nor example on this head ; his inspired Apostles, Peter and Paul, have more than sufficiently done it ; by enjoining their disciples to the most unreserved obedience to the municipal laws and civil magistracy

cy of their times ; and thence instructing Christians in general to a similar obedience to the reigning powers that be in all times.

In this, however, they have made men no farther slaves in this world than they are *Christians*, whose faith is fixed and whose hopes are centered in another. So far as they are still *men*, and bound to take part in the concerns of this world, while on their journey to the next, they are at liberty to resist oppression, and combat injustice, whether that of a domestic tyrant or a foreign invader.

“ Had my kingdom,” says our Saviour to Pilate, “ been of this world, “ then would my servants have fought, “ that I should not be delivered to the “ Jews.”

Granting that Christians, therefore, are not to propagate their *religion* by
force

force of arms, or to *fight* for *Christ's kingdom*, which is not of this world, they are not forbidden to fight for their own share in the kingdoms, which are of this world.—If men may not fight for their *religion*, they may fight for their *liberty* and *property*; and, in our opinion, they act the part of brave men and good Christians in so doing.

And yet our author says, “ If
 “ Christian nations were nations of
 “ Christians, all war would be impos-
 “ sible and unknown among them, and
 “ valour could be neither of use or
 “ estimation, and therefore could never
 “ have a place in the catalogue of
 “ Christian virtues; being irreconcil-
 “ able with all its precepts.”

Of a piece with this reasoning of our author's is that of *Roussseau*, in his *Social compact*; where he insinuates that
 a *Christian*

a *Christian soldier* is a kind of a contradiction in terms. But we have here given our reasons for thinking otherwise ; from which it follows, that even active valour appears to be a real, and not a fictitious, virtue.

For if a good Christian be a good patriot, he must be, ready to *act*, as well as *suffer*, for his country. He must at least be ready to fight, if necessary, in its *defence* ; and valour is as requisite to repel an invader as it is to invade the foe. There is as much active courage required in *defence* as in *offence* ; and hence, as loyalty and patriotism are the virtues of a good subject, *valour* must have some merit even with Christians as a moral virtue, at least active courage must be as much a moral virtue as *passive* †.

† They are in fact equally constitutional, as above hinted ; and, it is presumed are

not

But be that as it may, our author certainly falls into an error, in supposing it necessary for a good Christian to renounce his country to become a citizen of the world, a mere cosmopolite !

In not badly illustrated by the following poetical allusion.

The *Fountain* is thy favorite theme,
That trickles forth, a shallow stream,
In murmurs soft, a purling rill !—

What wilt thou do, to work thy mill ?

How wilt thou make to ride, at large,

Thy timber or thy loaded barge ?—

As much as purling rills admired

The navigable stream's required ;

The stream, whose turbulence abides

The roaring of the swelling tides ;

Alike whose raging bosom swells,

And back the threatening tide repels.—

Hence, to the Valiant and the Brave

Giv'n half the world, the rest to save !

EP. TO LOR.

In regard to the virtue of *Friendship*, our author, either wilfully or negligently imposes a change of terms upon us; reasoning very inaccurately on the subject.—

“ Friendship,” says he, “ likewise,
 “ although more congenial to the prin-
 “ ciples of Christianity arising from
 “ more tender and amiable disposi-
 “ tions, could never gain admittance
 “ amongst her benevolent precepts for
 “ the same reason; because it is too nar-
 “ row and confined, and appropriates
 “ that benevolence to a *single object*,
 “ which is here commanded to be ex-
 “ tended over *all*: Where friendships
 “ arise from similitude of sentiments,
 “ and disinterested affections, they are
 “ advantageous, agreeable, and inno-
 “ cent, but have little pretensions to
 “ merit; for it is justly observed, “ If
 “ ye love them, which love you,
 what

“ what thanks have ye? for sinners
 “ love those, that love them.’ But if
 “ they are formed from alliances in
 “ parties, factions, and interests, or
 “ from a participation of vices, the u-
 “ sual parents of what are called friend-
 “ ships among mankind, they are then
 “ both mischievous and criminal, and
 “ consequently forbidden, but in their
 “ utmost purity deserve no recommenda-
 “ tion from this religion.”

In reply, however, to what is here
 advanced on *friendship* and the text
 quoted from Luke in support of it,
 may be opposed the precept inculcated
 in John xiii. 34. quoted also by our au-
 thor in favour of that Christian virtue
 Charity: “ A new commandment I
 “ give unto you, That ye love one ano-
 “ ther; as I have loved you, that ye
 “ also love one another; by this shall all
 “ men

“ men know that ye are my disciples,
 “ if ye have love one to another.” —

Here we see that brotherly-love, or mutual friendship (which in the former text is represented as of little merit, being the virtue of sinners) is made the test, or criterion of christianity, the virtue one should imagine characteristic of saints.

Christian charity, in its *utmost extent* is certainly something more than mere friendship ; but we cannot help thinking that reciprocal affection, or, as our author styles it, that “ benevolent disposition” which is here made the characteristic of Christ’s disciples, the test of their obedience and the mark by which they are to be distinguished, is too near a-kin to friendship, to admit of friendship’s being with propriety discarded as a fictitious virtue, or as no virtue at all.

Our

Our author, indeed, is far from reasoning accurately on this head. For, after depreciating, as above, the virtue specified, he tells us, he “means not
 “by this to pass any censure on the
 “principles of valour, patriotism and
 “honour.”

The attentive reader will here observe that, in this respecification of the spurious or false virtues, our author hath substituted the term *honour* instead of *friendship*. The reason is, that, having changed his ground, he found *that* more pertinent to the state of his argument. Of that phantom modern *honour*, indeed, to which the most solid and substantial *friendships* are sometimes sacrificed, he may say justly, that “a
 “man, who makes this his ruling
 “principle, however virtuous he may
 “be, cannot be a Christian, because
 “he

“ he erects a standard of duty, and de-
 “ liberately adheres to it, diametrical-
 “ ly opposite to the whole tenor of
 “ that religion.

That the laws of such *honour* are incompatible with the rules of Christianity we readily allow, though we cannot allow that the firmest friendship for an individual is incompatible with that universal philanthropy, which Christianity inculcates for all mankind. Nay, we do not hold *patriotism* or even *valour* to be such mere *heathenish* virtues as our author would represent them.

“ They may be useful,” says he, “ and
 “ perhaps necessary, in the commerce
 “ and business of the *present turbulent*
 “ *and imperfect state*; and those who are
 “ actuated by them may be virtuous,
 “ honest, and even *religious* men: all
 “ that I assert is, that they cannot be
 “ *christians*.”—And yet, in a subse-
 quent

quent page of the work, we are expressly told that in the *present state* as enlightened by the gospel, “if we will not accept of christianity, we can have *no religion* at all.” *

After degrading the false virtues of paganism, he proceeds to enhance the *true* virtues of christianity. These are poverty of spirit—Christian charity—Penitence—Faith—Self-abasement and detachment from the world.—

Admitting all that is said in favour of most of these, as being founded on scriptural authority, the virtue of *faith*, that which is the most immediately connected with the evidence of the divine origin of christianity demands our more particular attention.

“Faith,” says our author, “is another moral duty enjoined by this institution,

* Surely this is inconsistent! “*Ay* and “*No* too can never be good divinity.”

“ institution, of a species so new, that
 “ the philosophers of antiquity had no
 “ words expressive of this idea, nor
 “ nor any such idea to be expressed;
 “ for the word *πίστις* or *fides*, which we
 “ translate *faith*, was never used by
 “ any pagan writer in a sense the least
 “ similar to that, to which it is ap-
 “ plied in the New Testament: where
 “ in general it signifies an humble,
 “ teachable, and candid disposition,
 “ a trust in God, and confidence in his
 “ promises; when applied particularly
 “ to Christianity, it means no more
 “ than a belief of this single propo-
 “ sition, that Christ was the son of God,
 “ that is in the language of those wri-
 “ tings, the Messiah, who was foretold
 “ by the prophets, and expected by
 “ the Jews; who was sent by God into
 “ the world to preach righteousness,
 “ judgment, and everlasting life, and
 “ to

“ to die as an atonement for the sins
 “ of mankind. This was all that
 “ Christ required to be believed by
 “ those who were willing to become
 “ his disciples : he, who does not be-
 “ lieve this, is not a Christian, and he
 “ who does, believes the whole that is
 “ essential to his profession, and all
 “ that is properly comprehended un-
 “ der the name of faith.”

We see here that, though our author
 scrupled at first setting out, to say what
 pure Christianity was, he has reduced it, in
 this illustration of Faith, to what he
 calls a *single* proposition. But he can-
 not be ignorant that this single propo-
 sition is sufficiently multifarious and
 complicated.

He cannot be ignorant that the ex-
 pression, *Son of God*, is differently un-
 derstood by different interpreters ; that
 some think it consistent with his being

a mere

a mere man, while others think it exalts him to an equality with the Deity.

He cannot be ignorant that his atonement by death for the sins of mankind, is controverted and even boldly denied by a considerable number of professed Christians.

To what purpose is it that our author tells us this proposition is the essential creed of a Christian, if other writers of equal authority tell us otherwise. Nay to what purpose is it, we are told that the same proposition is to be found in the Scriptures, whose truth we admit, if they are liable to various interpretation ?

It is in vain to say, that " when we are once convinced the Scriptures are of divine original, we have nothing more to do but implicitly believe what they tell us." How many thousand volumes of controversy have

E

there

there not been written to determine what they do tell us ! And is it not still left as indeterminate as ever.

Granting that implicit faith in divine revelation be our duty ; by what means are we to trace from the *history* of that revelation, what is really revealed ? Surely it must be by the same means as those by which we become convinced of its divine original ! And if reason be competent in the one case, it surely must be so in the other.

At the same time, if the operation of *grace* be necessary to impress the true sense and meaning of the scriptures on the mind and heart of the unconverted sinner, why should it be less necessary, as it is evidently equally expedient, to convince him of the divine origin of revelation in general ?—We firmly believe that, admitting the reality of our author's conversion to Christianity

Christianity (of which we have no reason to doubt) he is much more indebted for it to the efficacious and irresistible impulse of divine grace, than to all the pains he has taken, and the ingenuity he has exerted, in investigating the moral proofs of its divine institution.

But we shall in this section confine ourselves, in conformity to the author's method, to the consideration of Faith merely as a Christian duty. The objects of that Faith, with the nature of it, we shall discuss more particularly hereafter.

“Faith,” says he, “cannot be altogether void of moral merit, (as some would represent it) because it is in a degree voluntary ; for daily experience shews us, that men not only pretend to, but actually do believe, and disbelieve almost any

“ propositions, which best suits their
 “ interests, or inclinations, and un-
 “ feignedly change their sincere opi-
 “ nions with their situations and cir-
 “ cumstances. For we have power
 “ over the mind’s eye, as well as over
 “ the body’s, to shut it against the
 “ strongest rays of truth and religion,
 “ whenever they become painful to us,
 “ and to open it again to the faint
 “ glimmerings of scepticism and infi-
 “ delity when we “ love darkness ra-
 “ ther than light, because our deeds
 “ are evil.” And this, I think, suffi-
 “ ciently refutes all objections to the
 “ moral nature of faith, drawn from
 “ the supposition or its being quite in-
 “ voluntary and necessarily dependent
 “ on the degree of evidence, which is
 “ offered to our understandings.”

We cannot pretend to call in que-
 stion the ductility of our author’s *be-
 lieving*

believing organs, or the power he has over them to enable him to believe what he pleases. But, we must own, with regard to ourselves, we should be happy to be possessed of such power of credulity ; so as to be able to believe every thing to be true which best suits our interests, inclinations, and circumstances ; even though we should thence be subject to be sometimes disagreeably undeceived. We should get rid of many irksome reflections and enjoy many a happy hour, at the hazard only of being disturbed from our pleasing reveries, and exclaiming with the interrupted visionary ;

Pol, me occidistis, amici,
Non servastis *ait* ; cui sic extorta voluptas,
Et demtus per vim mentis gratissimus error.

As it is, we do not perceive ourselves, especially just at present, a whit more disposed to believe, than to doubt

the reality of what we wish to be true. We do not think the observation holds good, at least so generally, or in the degree here supposed. The bold and sanguine, indeed, are apt to anticipate their wishes ; but the timid and saturnine are as apt to procrastinate even their just expectations. It is as natural for the one to be confident as for the other to be dubious ; nay, persons of the same constitution are not always in the same disposition or mood either of doubt or credulity.

That there is some truth, however, in the rule, with respect to its general application, is probable ; as faith or facility of Belief is frequently and strongly recommended in the gospel.

But by the faith or easiness of belief, inculcated in the gospel, can surely be meant nothing more than the *pious assent* and submissive acquiescence of human

human reason to its mysterious and incomprehensible doctrines, agreeable to its gospel signification mentioned above *, and not that *rational conviction*, which arises from a clear comprehension of a proposition and the evident demonstration of its truth. The futility of recommending the latter kind of faith or facility of rational conviction, we think, is obvious.

Indeed we do not see the necessity of demonstration to produce such an assent, as is here admitted to constitute a *Christian's Faith*. If such Faith be, as our author says, an act of the *will* as much as of the understanding, there are many inducements to such an act that fall far short of demonstration.

E 4

If

* Meaning an humble, tractable, and candid disposition, a trust in God, and confidence in his promises. See page 71.

If it be, as he observes, “ well worth every man’s while to believe Christianity if he can,” and such belief depends so much on his will, one would think motives of self-interest alone would excite him to shew that he could, in this case, do as he would.

Is it not a sufficient incitement, to faith in Christianity, to reflect that “ it is the surest preservative against vicious habits and their attendant evils, the best resource under distresses and disappointments, ill health and ill fortune, and the firmest basis on which contemplation can rest ?”—That “ it is the only principle, which can retain men in a steady and uniform course of virtue, piety, and devotion, or can support them in the hour of distress, of sickness and of death ?”—

The word Faith, indeed, our author calls *unfortunate* : “ It has, says he,”
“ been

“ been so tortured and so misapplied
 “ to mean every absurdity, which ar-
 “ tifice could impose upon ignorance,
 “ that it has lost all pretensions to the
 “ title of virtue ; but if brought back
 “ to the simplicity of its original sig-
 “ nification, it well deserves that
 “ name, because it usually arises from
 “ the most amiable dispositions, and is
 “ always a direct contrast to pride, ob-
 “ stinacy, and self-conceit. If taken
 “ in the extensive sense of an assent
 “ to the evidence of things not seen,
 “ it comprehends the existence of a
 “ God, and a future state, and is
 “ therefore not only itself a moral vir-
 “ tue, but the source from whence all
 “ others must proceed ; for on the be-
 “ lief of these *all religion and morality*
 “ must *intirely* depend.”

Here again, we must remind this writer of his having before admitted

that men might be *virtuous, honest* and even *religious* men and yet *not* be *Christians*: whereas now he makes not only *all religion*, but *all morality* depend on Christian Faith for its very existence; such faith being here expressly declared not only in itself a moral virtue, but the source from whence all others must proceed.

Wits, they say, have short memories; but, when they turn logicians, philosophers and divines, they should endeavour to extend their memory, and keep it on the stretch, with the thread of their argument, from one end to the other.

On the whole, with respect to Faith, as a moral duty; there appears to us but very little argument necessary to enforce it. If men can believe or even half-believe what they will, it is so much their interest to do it ~~is~~ believing the

the truths of Christianity ; the man must be either a very great fool or a very great philosopher indeed, who would remain one moment an Infidel.

If, as this writer declares, *Faith* be also the source from whence all other real virtues must proceed, who would not be a Christian in practice as well as theory, without waiting a moment for any rational proof of the internal evidence of Christianity !

S E C T. V.

On the fourth or conclusive proposition.

“ That such a system of religion
 “ and morality could not possibly
 “ have been the work of any man
 “ or set of men : much less of those
 “ obscure and illiterate persons,
 “ who actually did discover and
 “ publish it to the world ; and that,

E 6 therefore,

“ therefore, it must undoubtedly
 “ have been effected by the in-
 “ terposition of divine power, that
 “ is, it must derive its origin from
 “ God.”—*This proposition shewn to
 contain only corollaries of the preceding
 propositions; and, though true as to
 fact, and therefore admitted ex gratia,
 still problematical in argument.*

THIS proposition, or rather two
 propositions united, our author gives,
 as corollaries to the three preceding;
 presuming they are so conclusive as to
 amount to little short of demonstra-
 tion. It is, indeed, founded, says he,
 “ on the very same reasoning by which
 “ the *material world* is proved to be the
 “ work of his invisible hand. We
 “ view with admiration the heavens
 “ and the earth, and all therein con-
 “ tained; we contemplate with amaze-
 “ ment

“ ment the minute bodies of animals
 “ too small for preception, and the
 “ immense planetary orbs too vast for
 “ imagination : we are certain that
 “ these cannot be the works of man ;
 “ and therefore we conclude with rea-
 “ son, that they must be the produc-
 “ tions of an omnipotent Creator.

“ In the same manner we see here
 “ a scheme of religion and morality
 “ unlike and superior to all ideas of
 “ the human mind, equally impossible
 “ to have been discovered by the know-
 “ ledge, as invented by the artifice of
 “ man ; and therefore by the very
 “ same mode of reasoning, and with
 “ the same justice, we conclude, that
 “ it must derive its origin from the
 “ same omnipotent and omniscient
 “ Being.”

With due deference to this inge-
 nious writer, this, like many other
 parts

parts of his work, is rather declamatory than argumentative. In contemplating the works of creation, our wonder is excited and our admiration raised, in proportion as human genius is enabled to trace the marks of divine wisdom in the Great Artificer.

The vulgar indeed may gape and stare at what they cannot comprehend; but how limited are their ideas, how low are their conceptions of the power and wisdom of the Deity! Their wonder at the most stupendous instances of both, is like that of a child at the squeaking of a trumpet or the tinkling of a rattle.

The admiration of the ignorant indeed is founded on their ignorance, that of the scientific on their knowledge. It is not from what we *do not* comprehend that we deduce the wisdom and power of the Creator, but
from

from what we *do* comprehend ; which, however comparatively little, is the real foundation of our faith in his omniscience and omnipotence.

On the other hand it is, according to this writer, from the incomprehensibility of the scriptures, as well as of the works of nature, that their divine origin is to be deduced.

The manner of reasoning therefore, is not, as this writer asserts, the same in both cases, but totally different. In reasoning from our view of the material world, we prudently reason from what we know, and how shall we reason otherwise. "What can we reason but from what we know?" And yet, in logicising according to our author's mode from a view both of the material world and of revelation we foolishly attempt to reason from what we do *not* know.

Thus, he says, of the former. "It
" is

“ is not in the least surprizing, that
 “ we are not able to understand the
 “ spiritual dispensations of the Al-
 “ mighty, when his material works are
 “ to us no less incomprehensible, our
 “ reason can afford us no insight into
 “ those great properties of matter,
 “ gravitation, attraction, elasticity,
 “ and electricity, nor even into the es-
 “ sence of matter itself : Can reason
 “ teach us how the sun’s luminous orb
 “ can fill a circle, whose diameter con-
 “ tains many millions of miles, with
 “ a constant inundation of successive
 “ rays during thousands of years, with-
 “ out any perceivable diminution of
 “ that body, from whence they are
 “ continually poured, or any augmen-
 “ tation of those bodies on which they
 “ fall, and by which they are con-
 “ stantly absorbed ? Can reason tell us
 “ how those rays, darted with a velo-
 “ city

“ city greater than that of a canon ball,
 “ can strike the tenderest organs of the
 “ human frame without inflicting any
 “ degree of pain, or by what means
 “ this percussion only can convey the
 “ forms of distant objects to an imma-
 “ terial mind ? or how any union can
 “ be formed between material and im-
 “ material essences, or how the wounds
 “ of the body can give pain to the soul,
 “ or the anxiety of the soul can ema-
 “ ciate and destroy the body ? That
 “ all these things are so, we have vi-
 “ sible and indisputable demonstra-
 “ tion ; but how they can be so, is to
 “ us as incomprehensible, as the most
 “ abstruse mysteries of Revelation can
 “ possibly be.”

But, so far are we from having any
 visible and indisputable demonstration
 of the union, or even existence of two
 essentially different and distinct sub-
 stances

stances, in body and soul, that our ablest philosophers deny the possibility of such demonstration.*

And, indeed, if our author did not himself confess it, we should hardly be made to believe that he is himself so bad a philosopher, as to take the evidence of *sense* (than which nothing is more fallible) for demonstration.

It is with propriety indeed he asks if reason can explain the popular system of the solar rays in exhibiting the emanations of light : because that *popular system* is *unphilosophical*, unreasonable, and merely imaginary. Were he acquainted with the real mechanism productive of those phenomena, he might be struck with the amazing display of wisdom and power in the divine mechanism, but he would find no greater mystery

* See Dr Priestley's Introduction to Hartley's Essays on Man.

tery in it than in the complicated operation of the most simple mechanic powers.

We do readily agree with this ingenious investigator, that we see but a small part of the great Whole; that we know but little of the relation, which the present life bears to pre-existent and future states; that we can conceive little of the nature of God and his attributes or mode of existence; that we can comprehend little of the material and still less of the moral plan on which the universe is constituted, or on what principle it proceeds.

But we cannot admit ourselves to be quite so ignorant of the mechanism of the material universe or the true principles of natural philosophy, as our author appears to be.

And though with regard to the theological

logical plan of the universe, we should confess our greater ignorance and incapacity of comprehension, we should *not* presume, as our author in fact does, to deduce the internal evidence of its divine origin from that very incapacity.—On the contrary, we think even the best experience and historical information respecting both the works of *nature* and the doctrines of *revelation* equally insufficient to form such a conclusion.*

Another

* Whether from *Nature's* general law.

The outlines of our creed we draw,

Or think the truth be only given

In *revelation* pure from Heaven,

It matters not, unless we find

Some active index in the mind,

Some ray of *grace*, a purer light,

To point or here or there aright.

EP. TO LOR.

Another argument, adduced by this author, respects the propagation of this religion, which, he says, is not less extraordinary than the religion itself, or less above the reach of all human power, than the discovery of it was above that of all human understanding.

“ It is well known, says he, that in
 “ the course of a very few years, it was
 “ spread over all the principal parts of
 “ Asia and of Europe, and this by the
 “ ministry only of an inconsiderable
 “ number of the most inconsiderable
 “ persons ; that at this time paganism
 “ was in the highest repute, believed
 “ universally by the vulgar and patro-
 “ nized by the great ; that the wisest
 “ men of the wisest nations assisted at
 “ its sacrifices and consulted its oracles
 “ on the most important occasions :
 “ Whether these were the tricks of the
 “ *priests* or of the *devil*, is of no conse-
 “ quence

“ quence, as they were both *equally* u:
 “ *likely* to be converted or *overcome* ;
 “ the fact is certain, that on the preach
 “ ing of a few fishermen, their altars
 “ were deserted, and their deities were
 “ dumb.”

Out of veneration for the subject,
 we shall not place this argument in
 that ridiculous light, into which it
 might be thrown. At the same time,
 having intimated in what a suspicious
 light we hold historical evidence in ge-
 neral, we shall not enter into any dis-
 pute about matters of fact.

We might otherwise controvert the
reputable state of paganism at the com-
 mencement of the Christian æra ; the
 immediate dumb-founding of its oracles
 by

* The clergy are much obliged to the
 writer for putting their power on a par, and
 of course, making them, what they ought to
 be, a *match* for the *devil*.

by the preaching of the fishermen, and the consequent establishment of Christianity in the principal parts of Europe and Asia. †

The belief of the vulgar in any age reflects

† At least, if its doctrine obtained a hearing, and for a while a very partial reception, they were soon obscured and obliterated; while religion and philosophy were consigned to oblivion together. “When
“Minerva could no longer protect her city,
“it was forsaken by good fortune, and
“would have lingered in decay, but the
“barbarians interposed, and suddenly completed its downfall. Athens itself was
“pillaged by Goths, and its libraries consumed. Devastation reigned within and
“solitude without its walls.” A situation in which, according to Dr Chandler, it remains to this day, notwithstanding the successive efforts of Christian emperors, and pontiffs, by croisades and holy wars, to effect its establishment.

reflects but little credit on their religion; and as to the wisest men of the wisest nations of paganism consulting the oracle on important occasions; we can no more infer their really interesting themselves in behalf of paganism, than we can infer a similar conclusion in favour of Christianity from the similar farce which the wisest men of the wisest nations in Europe play now.

Even in this protestant country, do not our patricians, senators, and magistrates, go in procession to church, and pay their formal devoirs on certain red letter days, though they laugh at the institution, and even execrate the occasion?—In polished popish countries, their religious ceremonies are still as much more pompous and solemn, as the occasion or design is still more held in contempt and derision, even by the
very

very persons assisting in their celebration. *

The fact is, paganism was just in the same *reputable* state in Greece and Rome at that time, as Christianity is in Paris and Rome at this day : so that if political circumstances did not interfere, and Christianity had no better support than the patronage of the Great and the piety of the populace, it might without a miracle be preached out of both cities by a methodist or a mountebank, in much less time than paganism, was formerly preached out of Rome and Athens, by a few fishermen. Our author allows that “ nei-
F “ ther

* That sensible and discerning traveller, Mrs Miller, remarked in particular the archsneer of the Roman pontiff, while he performed the ceremony of serving at table, and washing the feet, of the poor priests, in the farce of the holy week.

“ther learning nor sagacity is now
 “able precisely to ascertain circum-
 “stances, equally interesting, of still
 “later times ;” we wonder, therefore,
 he should rest on this circumstance a-
 lone the divine authority of the fisher-
 men’s commission. It is equally
 surprising, that having so many ar-
 guments, and all of them according
 to him separately irrefragable, he
 should think it necessary to accumu-
 late others merely plausible.

Of this kind is that paradoxical in-
 sinuation that the improbabilities on
 the other side of the question are so
 much greater that an infidel must be
 an unbeliever from mere credulity. *

Of the same kind is that trite, in-
 sinuating, *beggarly* plea (as Lord Shafts-
 bury calls it) of “ what harm could
 “ ensue,

* See View, page 107.

“ ensue, if Christianity should after all
 “ prove a fable ?”

There may be in some cases great virtue in that *if*; but to *us*, it appears very extraordinary that ever such a supposition should come from a writer, who has laboured so hard, and adduced so many arguments to prove its impossibility.—Suppose ! quotha !—

Surely, after all, he does not think there is still “ left a loop to hang a
 “ doubt on,” that he is so very anxious to *persuade* those he may not *convince* ! that he dwells so earnestly on the *saving* pleas of their being nothing to be *lost* and so much to be *got* by believing in Christianity ! * Be this as it may, the whole argumentative part of the author’s propositions and inference may be reduced to this : “ The Christian
 F 2 “ system

* See View, page 111.

“ system would never have entered in-
 “ to the heads of any persons whatever.
 “ It is inconceivable therefore how
 “ such men as *did*, could propagate it.
 “ —*Ergo*, It must have been conceiv-
 “ ed and propagated by the immediate
 “ and miraculous interposition of the
 “ Deity.”—

Such is, in sum and substance, the
 whole of this mighty argument! in
 the exposition of which, we have pos-
 sibly bestowed already much more time
 and pains than the discerning reader
 will think necessary.

But, having proceeded so far with
 our author's *view*, we shall now pro-
 ceed till we have shewn the vanishing
 point of his *perspective*.—

SECT.

SECT. VI.

On the writer's general conclusions and his notions concerning the essential objects of the Christian faith.—Till these objects are precisely determined, the determination of the question respecting their divine origin of little importance.

ADMITTING even this writer's propositions to have been demonstrated and the internal evidence of the divine origin of the Christian religion fully proved; we yet still recur to the question, "What is the Christian religion, "or what are its doctrines?"

We have already observed that even the actual professors of Christianity are, by no means agreed on this head. * Our author himself, indeed, com-
 F 3 plains,

* See page 74.

plains, that “ some there are, who,
 “ by perverting the established signifi-
 “ cation of words, (which they call ex-
 “ plaining) have ventured to expunge
 “ *all the principal* doctrines out of the
 “ scriptures, for no other reason than
 “ that they are not able to comprehend
 “ them ; and argue thus :—*The scrip-*
 “ *tures are the word of God ; in his word*
 “ *no propositions contradictory to reason can*
 “ *have a place ; these propositions are con-*
 “ *tradictory to reason, and therefore they*
 “ *are not there* : But if these bold assertors
 “ would claim any regard, they should
 “ reverse their argument, and say—These
 “ doctrines make a part, and a mate-
 “ rial part of the scriptures, they are
 “ contradictory to reason ; no propo-
 “ sitions contradictory to reason can
 “ be a part of the word of God, and
 “ therefore neither the scriptures, nor
 “ the pretended revelation contained
 “ in them, can be derived from him :
 “ this

“ this would be an argument worthy
 “ of rational and candid deists, and de-
 “ mand a respectful attention ; but
 “ when men pretend to disprove facts
 “ by reasoning, they have no right to
 “ expect an answer.”

Our author will, therefore, hardly think it worth his while to answer the questions, put to him, on this head, by certain Reviewers ; who demand to know where, or by what passages the New Testament inculcates the doctrines he specifies : doctrines, which the *rational* advocates of Christianity, they pretend, are afraid to adopt. “ These
 “ advocates,” say they, “ cannot adopt
 “ notions and sentiments, which are
 “ founded on ambiguous, figurative,
 “ or sacrificial expressions ; and suspect
 “ a misinterpretation of scripture,
 “ where the doctrine they embrace is

“ far removed from every tract of the
 “ human imagination.”

This is exactly what our author upbraids them for, their wanting to reduce the extent of divine wisdom to the line of the human understanding.

At the same time, before we can admit our author to have deduced any conclusive argument respecting the internal evidence of the Christian religion, it is requisite he should certify what its doctrines are. The critics last-mentioned suspect a misinterpretation of scripture, where the doctrine they inculcate is far removed from every tract of the human imagination.—The *Monthly Reviewers* say also, “ it has not
 “ occurred to *them* that doctrines, al-
 “ lowed to be contradictory to reason,
 “ are not on this account the less cre-
 “ dible.”

On the other hand, our author
 makes

makes their inconsistency with reason, and their being above the flight of human imagination, the very criterion of their divine origin and, of course, their credibility. The scriptures, according to him, “ contain ideas totally “ unheard of, and quite dissimilar from “ any which had ever been thought on “ previous to their publication. No “ other, says he, ever drew so just a “ portrait of the worthlessness of this “ world, and all its pursuits, nor exhibited such distinct, lively and exquisite pictures of the joys of another; of the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the triumphs of the righteous in that tremendous day, ‘ when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and “ this mortal shall put on immortality.’ “ No other has ever represented the “ supreme Being in the character of

“ three persons united in one God. No
 “ other has attempted to reconcile
 “ those seeming contradictory but both
 “ true propositions, the contingency
 “ of future events, and the foreknow-
 “ ledge of God, or the free will of the
 “ creature with the *over-ruling grace* of
 “ the Creator. No other has so fully
 “ declared the necessity of wicked-
 “ ness and punishment, yet so effec-
 “ tually instructed individuals to resist
 “ the one, and to escape the other :
 “ no other has ever pretended to give
 “ any account of the depravity of
 “ man, or to point out any remedy
 “ for it : no other has ventured to de-
 “ clare the unpardonable nature of sin
 “ without the influence of a mediato-
 “ rial interposition, and a vicarious
 “ atonement from the sufferings of a
 “ superior Being.”

Such

Such are the objects of the Christian Religion according to this author ; but it is well known that the most essential of these doctrines are either totally disbelieved or explained away by a very considerable part of the professors of Christianity.

The very Reviewers, above mentioned, in particular, cannot allow with this writer “ that the province of reason is *only* to examine into the *authority* of Revelation ; and when that is proved that reason has nothing more to do than to acquiesce.”

And so far *we* agree with *them* that Reason is just as well qualified to judge of the interpretation of particular texts and passages of scripture, as to judge of the authenticity of the whole.

But we deny, on the authority of that very scripture, that unenlightened
F 6
reason

reason is qualified to judge of either, Our author “readily, as unnecessarily, acknowledges, as before observed, that the scriptures are not revelations from God, but the history of such Revelations;” of whose imperfections and fallibility, therefore, we say, nothing less than the influence of that divine grace, which inspired the revelation itself, can qualify any man to judge.

Hence the moral arguments, and historical evidence, which our author adduces, to prove the divine origin of revelation, appear nugatory.

To deny the probable facts, he says, related in the New Testament, would be as absurd as to deny the probable facts in any other history.—This is true, and yet the joint evidence of all the probable facts, related in any history sacred or profane, amounts to no more than

than that moral evidence, which will justify the belief of probable (not improbable) facts.

The same may be said of the doctrines of the Scriptures ; if their divine authority is to depend on mere *historical* evidence, they should appear to be as *rational* as the evidence, on which that authority is supported, is *probable* : and not the credibility of both facts and doctrines left preposterously to be supported, according to our author's scheme, by the improbability of the one, and incomprehensibility of the other *.

“ To

* See page 11. Indeed the suggestion that any thing should be credible in proportion to its being incomprehensible, is, in itself, a proof how far the human genius can soar into the mysterious and sublime. Why, therefore, suppose it so incapable of inventing mysterious and sublime religious systems?

Genius

“ To ascertain the true system and
 “ genuine doctrines of this religion af-
 “ ter the undecided controversies of
 “ above seventeen centuries, and to re-
 “ move all the rubbish, which artifice
 “ and ignorance have been heaping
 “ upon it during all that time, would
 “ indeed be an arduous task, which
 “ our author will by no means under-
 “ take ;” nor is it, indeed, necessary
 when he can reduce all the essentials
 as he supposes, into so small a com-
 pass.

But

Genius, Lorenzo, yours or mine,
 Faint image of a power divine ;
 Endow'd with ev'n *creative* power
 To form the Beings of an hour,
 To people worlds, to light the skies,
 To bid a new *creation* rise ;
 O'er all to wield the thunderer's rod,
 And act the momentary God !

EP. TO LOR.

But it is necessary that these essentials should be agreed on and rendered indisputable, before the proof of their divine origin can be of any use.

With respect, for instance, to one of the most essential:—"That Christ
 "suffered and died as an atonement
 "for the sins of mankind, is a doctrine," says the writer, "so constantly and so strongly enforced through
 "every part of the New Testament,
 "that whoever will seriously peruse
 "those writings, and deny that it is
 "there, may, with as much reason and
 "truth, after reading the works of
 "Thucydides and Livy, assert, that
 "in them no mention is made of any
 "facts relative to the histories of
 "Greece and Rome."

We are perfectly of his opinion in this respect, and yet it is with astonishing confidence the contrary is maintained

maintained by many late writers of pretended candour and undoubted abilities. So that while the doctrines of Christianity are thus in dispute (that is) till it be determined what the essential doctrines of Revelation are, we conceive, as we said before, the determination of the question respecting its divine origin to be of very little importance ; even if it were determinable by our author's mode of argument. But, again we say, we can by no means agree with him that men would believe divine revelation in proportion as its tenets were incomprehensible to the understanding.

On the contrary, the inference we should naturally draw from the imperfect state of human science and the insufficiency of unassisted reason to attain any portion of divine knowledge, would be, that nothing but the immediate influence of Grace, the inspiration

tion of the Almighty which giveth understanding, could induce the sceptic to believe either the divine origin of the scriptures or the doctrines, they contain.

S E C T. VII.

*On the objections, that have been made to the divinity and veracity of the Christian religion : and particularly to objection the FIRST, viz, “ That divine
 “ Revelation is incredible because
 “ unnecessary, because the reason,
 “ which God has bestowed on man-
 “ kind is sufficiently able to disco-
 “ ver all the religious and moral du-
 “ ties, which he requires of them;
 “ if they will but attend to her pre-
 “ cepts and be guided by her friend-
 “ ly admonitions.”—This objection
 shewn to be neither properly stated nor
 satisfactorily removed.*

“ IF

“ IF,” says our author, “ I have
 “ demonstrated the divine origin of the
 “ Christian religion by an argument
 “ which cannot be confuted ; no
 “ others, however plausible or nume-
 “ rous, founded on probabilities,
 “ doubts and conjectures, can ever dis-
 “ prove it, because *if* it is once shewn
 “ to be true, it cannot be false *.”

There is no parrying these *ifs* ; but
if this writer’s argument be *not* such as
 cannot be confuted, there may be some-
 thing in the arguments founded on
 probabilities, doubts and conjectures,
 that make against it.—It is on that sup-
 position, we imagine, he attempts to
 refute such objections : as it is on that
 conviction, viz. that his argument it-
 self is invalid, that we shall proceed
 to consider how far he has been success-
 ful in removing them.

In

* See View, page 10.

In answer to the first objection *,
 “ That Revelation is incredible be-
 “ cause unnecessary, on the plea of the
 “ sufficiency of human reason to dis-
 “ cover all the religious and moral du-
 “ ties God requires of them.” He ob-
 serves, that “ Reason alone is so far
 “ from being sufficient to offer to man-
 “ kind a perfect religion, that it has
 “ never yet been able to lead them to
 “ any degree of culture or civilisation
 “ whatever ;” deducing a demonstra-
 tion (as it *seems* to him) from History,
 that “ although human reason is ca-
 “ pable of *progression* in science, yet
 “ the first foundation must be laid by
 “ supernatural instructions †.

Now, says he, “ As Reason in her
 “ natural state is incapable of making
 “ any

* See View, page. 115.

† See View, p. 118.

" any *progreſs* * in knowledge, ſo when
 " furniſhed with materials by ſuperna-
 " tural aid, if left to the guidance of
 " her own wild imaginations, ſhe falls
 " into more numerous, and more groſs
 " errors, than her own native igno-
 " rance could ever have ſuggeſted."

Only think, reader, of the *wild ima-*
ginations of *Reason* !—And yet the *rea-*
ſonable ſuggeſtions, which our author
 enumerates, it muſt be owned, are *wild*
 and extravagant enough.

" SHE," ſays he (that is *Reason*)
 " has perſuaded ſome, that there is
 " no

* Does our author make a diſtinction be-
 tween *progreſs in knowledge* and *progreſſion in*
Science, that human reaſon is admitted to be
 incapable of one and not of the other ? Or
 does he mean by *progreſſion* in *Science*, of
 which reaſon is incapable, the ſtarting *ab*
initio, which he confines to ſupernatural
 communication ? In either caſe there is an
 apparent contradiction.

“no God; others that there can
 “be no future state: she has taught
 “some, that there is no difference be-
 “tween vice and virtue, and that to
 “cut a man’s throat and to relieve his
 “necessities are actions equally meri-
 “torious: she has convinced many,
 “that they have no free-will in oppo-
 “sition to their own experience: some
 “that there can be no such thing as
 “soul, or spirit, contrary to their own
 “perceptions; and others, no such
 “thing as matter or body, in contra-
 “diction to their senses. By analy-
 “sing all things she can shew, that
 “there is *nothing* in *any thing*; by per-
 “petual shifting she can reduce all
 “existence to the invisible dust of
 “scepticism; and by recurring to
 “first principles, prove to the satis-
 “faction of her followers, that there
 “are no principles at all.”

After

After this curious piece of sophistical declamation, he adds, "How far
 "such a guide is to be depended on in
 "the important concerns of religion,
 "and morals, I leave to the *judg-*
 "*ment* of every *considerate* man to de-
 "termine."

That is, after declaring *Reason* to be a fallacious guide and an incompetent judge, he will leave it to the direction of that very guide and the determination of that very judge, how far such direction and determination are to be depended on!—For what else can he mean by leaving it to the *judgment* of any *considerate* man? Is not this leaving it to *Reason*, or setting up *Reason* in judgment on herself?

To do justice to the noblest faculty of the human mind, we will venture to declare that *Reason* never
 suggested

suggested any of the above extravagancies to any man.

Reason never could persuade any man that "there is *no* God." Indeed the office of *Reason* is not *persuasion* but *conviction*, and no man, capable of conviction, ever yet was even *persuaded* that *second* causes do not proceed from a *first*. *

Reason never taught any man there is no difference between *virtue* and *vice*: His necessary use of the very terms is a proof of it; as well as the natural

* No *Atheist* e'er was known on earth,
Till fiery zealots gave him birth,
For controversy's sake their trade;
Damning the heretic they made.

Of the *first* cause, or fools or wise
The pure existence none denies;
Tho' in its *essence* few agree:
For who *defines* INFINITY!

EP. TO LOR.

natural sense of justice, implanted in the breast of every human being. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is not merely a New Testament doctrine. It is as old as the multiplication of mankind; it is an universal principle, a law of which (to use the expression of a celebrated, though inconsistent, moralist) "*every man may find the exposition in his own breast* *."

Reason never taught any man, there can be no future state. The utmost, that reason ever taught, is that we are indebted to *revelation* for the certain knowledge of such state or must depend chiefly on scriptural proof for the evidence of it. Not but that there are even rational *arguments* in its favour, as well

* The Rambler, No. 81.

well of the physical and moral * as of the religious kind. †

* Setting aside the moral and religious pleas usually adduced in proof of a future state; the strong probability of it is plausibly urged, in the eighth epistle to Lorenzo, on the simplest plea.

To *animals* of every kind

Are their peculiar powers assign'd;

To actuate, strengthen, or restrain;

Nor sense nor instinct giv'n in vain?

Man, a mere animal confess'd,

Is yet distinguish'd from the rest;

His pow'rs, his views, his labours *here*,

Presumptive of a *brighter sphere*!

Say, why is *knowledge* giv'n, to raise
Our wonder to our Maker's praise?

Why are we taught our God t'adore,

If seen in death his face no more?—

It cannot be.—Of heav'nly birth,

Science, descending to the earth,

To man hath Jacob's ladder given;

Reaching, an angel's flight, to heaven!

† Is it, because we know not why,

So sad a thing for once to die?

Reason never persuaded any man that he hath no *free-will*, in opposition to his own experience.—If she suggested a doubt of his capacity to will

Is it so hazardous, my friend,
On God, our maker, to depend?
That God, to whom we being owe,
Our friend and guardian here below;
Who all along the vale of life,
In ev'ry scene of care and strife,
Affords his providential arm,
To raise beneath, or shield from, harm?
Is it for *him* so hard to save
That conscious Being from the grave?—
Secure, Lorenzo, in the power,
That wak'd me at my natal hour,
To me and mine, in life so just,
On him in death I mean to trust;
Safe in the hollow of his hand,
Fearless to fall by whom I stand,
Of whom I kiss the chastening rod,
And bless the *father* in the God.

EP. TO LOR.

will or act without a motive, it is a suggestion founded on all experience; as his conviction of not being a mere mechanical machine, actuated by no motives at all, is founded on the same experience.

Reason never suggested the non-existence of soul or body, of matter or spirit, in *contradiction* to our senses and perceptions.—Neither matter nor spirit are ideas of *sensation*, but of *reflection*. *Reason* teaches us, indeed, the fallibility of sensation and perception, and the means of correcting their errors; and well for us it is, that she does so: we should else be totally destitute of science; and, for want of the instincts of other animals, should be in a worse situation than the brutes that perish.

From the above specification, indeed, of the supposed absurdities of human reason, it appears to us that, our au-

thor hath neither physics nor metaphysics enough to enter on a philosophical discussion of the points in question.—We might, therefore, in like manner, leave to the judgment of our confederate readers to determine, whether the *Reason*, or rather the *Imagination*, of any man, in his senses, ever fell into grosser errors than has here that of our author; in which case, they would likewise determine how far such a guide is to be depended on in the important concerns of religion and morals.

We might, indeed, censure here the superficial and illogical manner; in which this writer has stated this objection; *viz.* his speaking of mankind, as if the human mind was something distinct from, and possessed of, the power of controuling its essential faculties.

But that excellent logician, Mr Harris, in his Dialogue on Happiness,
hath

hath illustrated, in the most perspicuous manner, the *reciprocal influence* of *reason* and *passion* in the conduct and composition of the human mind. To such writers, therefore, we refer our author, for the attainment of more precise ideas on this subject than he seems at present to possess, or will ever obtain from the loose and rambling reasonings of those who stile themselves *Christian philosophers* or *rational divines*.

S E C T. VIII.

On his reply to a second objection, "That
" the Old and New Testament can-
" not be a revelation from God, be-
" cause in them are to be found er-
" rors and inconsistencies, fabulous
" stories, false facts and false philo-
" sophy ; which can never be deri-
" ved from the Fountain of all
" Truth."—This objection shewn to

be rather enforced by the author's concessions, than removed by his conclusions.

HERE our author very readily (and, as we before observed, in our opinion, for his argument unnecessarily) acknowledges that the scriptures are not revelations from God, but only the *history* of them. "The revelation itself," says he, "is derived from God; but the history of it is the production of men, and therefore the truth of it is not in the least affected by their fallibility." †

He admits, of course, that the inspired writers were not always under the influence of inspiration; for, if they had, says he, St Paul, who was shipwrecked, and left his cloak and parchments at Troas, would not have put to sea before a storm, nor have
forgot

† See View, page 123.

forgot himself so much as to leave his cloak behind him.

“ But,” continues he, “ if in these
 “ books a religion superior to all hu-
 “ man imagination actually exists, it
 “ is of no consequence to the proof of
 “ its divine origin, by what means it
 “ was there introduced, or with what
 “ human errors and imperfections it
 “ is blended. A diamond, though
 “ found in a bed of mud, is still a dia-
 “ mond, nor can the dirt, which sur-
 “ rounds it, depreciate its value or de-
 “ stroy its lustre.”

This allusion may be well calculated to catch the simple apprehension of the superficial reader ; but, one of the least discrimination cannot fail to discover how totally inapplicable it is to the subject in question.

A fine lady, indeed, may carelessly drop a manufactured brilliant into the
 G 4 kennel,

kennel, to be accidentally picked up by a gold-finder; but rough diamonds are not originally found there; they have not their native bed in the streets, or on the dunghill; but are dug from mines, prepared by Nature's process for their production: in which state, also, they do not shine with a lustre so greatly superior to the surrounding materials.

We by no means agree with our author, therefore, that his proof of the internal evidence of the divine origin of revelation, does not suffer, by admitting that "the prophecies are all
"fortunate guesses or artful applica-
"tions, and the miracles there record-
"ed no better than legendary tales."*

On the contrary we conceive that such an heterogeneous mixture of truth and falsehood, as he hypothetically admits

* See View, page 131.

admits in the *history*, as he calls it, of revelation, would, if it really existed there, very reasonably bring the truths it contains into doubt.—Nay, we will go so far as to admit that there really do appear so many errors and inconsistencies, in that history, that unenlightened reason cannot reconcile them: the inspiration of *grace* being as necessary to point out these truths and induce a firm belief of them, as it was to direct and enable the inspired writers to record them.

S E C T. IX.

On his reply to a third objection. “ That
 “ a wise and benevolent Creator
 “ should have constituted a world
 “ upon one plan and a religion
 “ for it on another.” *Under the term*
religion in this objection, the author

is shewn to include morals also ; but the purity of the Christian morals is shewn not to be calculated for the constitution of this world, and therefore not required of Christians in their present state of probation.

“ TO some speculative and refined
 “ observers it has appeared incredible,”
 says our author, “ that a wise and be-
 “ nevolent Creator should have consti-
 “ tuted a world upon one plan, and
 “ a religion for it on another ; that is,
 “ that he should have revealed a reli-
 “ gion to mankind, which not only
 “ contradicts the principal passions and
 “ inclinations which he has implanted
 “ in their natures, but is incompatible
 “ with the whole œconomy of that
 “ world which he has created, and in
 “ which he has thought proper to
 “ place them. This, say they, with
 “ regard

“ regard to the Christian, is apparently
 “ the case : the love of power, riches,
 “ honour, and fame, are the great
 “ incitements to generous and magna-
 “ nymous actions ; yet by this institu-
 “ tion are all these depreciated and dis-
 “ couraged. Government is essential
 “ to the nature of man, and cannot be
 “ managed without certain degrees of
 “ violence, corruption, and impossi-
 “ tion ; yet are all these strictly forbid.
 “ Nations cannot subsist without wars,
 “ nor war be carried on without ra-
 “ pine, desolation, and murder : yet
 “ are these prohibited under the seve-
 “ rest threats. The non-resistance of
 “ evil must subject individuals to con-
 “ tinual oppressions, and leave nations
 “ a defenceless prey to their enemies ;
 “ yet is this recommended. Perpetual
 “ patience under insults and injuries
 “ must every day provoke new insults

“and new injuries, yet is this enjoined.
 “A neglect of all we eat and drink and
 “wear, must put an end to all com-
 “merce, manufactures, and industry ;
 “yet is this required. In short, were
 “these precepts universally obeyed,
 “the disposition of all human affairs
 “must be entirely changed, and the
 “business of the world, constituted as
 “it now is, could not go on.”

The *Monthly* Reviewers very justly
 observe, on this passage, that no seri-
 ous advocate for Christianity can admit
 all these contradictions : for, indeed,
 they militate not less against the prac-
 tical principles of Christianity than
 against those of Common-sense. Our
 author, nevertheless boldly affirms that
 “Such is the Christian revelation, tho’
 “some of its advocates may perhaps
 “be unwilling to own it, and such it
 “is constantly declared to be by him
 “who

“ who gave it,] as well as by those
 “ who published it under his immedi-
 “ ate direction :” To these he says,
 “ *If ye were of the world, the world*
 “ *would love his own ; but because ye are*
 “ *not of the world, but I have chosen you*
 “ *out of the world, therefore the world ha-*
 “ *teth you **.” To the Jews he declares,
 “ *Ye are of this world ; I am not of this*
 “ *world †.*” St Paul writes to the Ro-
 “ mans, “ *Be not conformed to this*
 “ *world ‡;*” and to the Corinthians,
 “ *We speak not the wisdom of this world §.*”
 “ St James says, “ *Know ye not, that*
 “ *the friendship of the world is enmity*
 “ *with God ? whosoever therefore will be*
 “ *a friend of the world is the enemy*
 “ *of God ||.*” This irreconcilable
 “ disagreement between Christianity
 “ and the world is announced in num-
 “ berless

* John xv. 19.

† John viii. 23.

‡ Rom. xii. 2.

§ Cor. ii. 6.

|| Jam. iv. 4.

“berless other places in the New Tes-
 “tament, and indeed by the whole te-
 “mour of those writings. These are
 “plain declarations, which, in spite
 “of all the evasions of those good
 “managers, who choose to take a lit-
 “tle of this world in their way to hea-
 “ven, stand fixed and immoveable
 “against all their arguments drawn
 “from public benefit and pretended
 “necessity, and must ever forbid any
 “reconciliation between the pursuits
 “of this world and the Christian in-
 “stitution.”

We have as much contempt as our
 author can have for those good mana-
 gers, who choose to take as much of
 this world as they can with them in
 their journey to the next. We are also
 as well satisfied as he can be, that
 Christian morality in its purity is not
 calculated for the practice of man in
 his

his present state; but inculcated to inspire a proper disposition preparatory to another. But, for the same reasons, we think the observance of it no farther required of us than it is *practicable*.

“ *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men **,” says St. Paul to the Romans. The Christian religion enjoins not impossibilities; it imposes not hard and impracticable duties; requiring no more of any man than *lieth in him*. The Scripture expressly declares, “ Its yoke is easy and its burthen is light †.”

* Rom. xii. 18.

† But are self-mortification, penance, the loving one's enemies, the renouncing one's property and even one's life; are these easy or light?—We believe that, however they may have been required of particular persons on particular occasions, the general imposition of such unnecessary commands hath

The several texts, therefore, above adduced by our author, are evidently misapplied.

That a conformity to the vices and follies of the world is prohibited to Christians, is most certain; but where are they forbid to conform to the established customs and necessary duties of society? Are they not, on the other hand, expressly enjoined, to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake?—To pay themost implicit obedience to magistrates and all that are in power; for that the powers, that be, are of God?*

Where is it, we ask again, that Christians are required by the Scriptures so to act as to put an end to all commerce, manufactures, and industry; to change the disposition of all human affairs,

have only served to disgust the well-disposed and sincere Christian, and to fill the world with *hypocrites*.

affairs, and put a stop to the business of the world?—

Are these extravagances deduced from our Saviour's sermon on the Mount and the instructions he gave his immediate disciples?—Men possessed of the power of working miracles for their support or defence, might safely indeed leave to-morrow to take care for itself, careless of what they might eat, drink or wear. But setting aside the consideration that many things may be enjoined as particular and personal duties, adapted to time and place, which are by no means required universally; setting aside also the consideration that our Saviour was exhibiting to his disciples a theory of morality, adapted rather to man in a state of perfection than to man in his present imperfect state of probation; it is plain that he had in view the holding
up

up a contrast to the boasted morality of those vain-glorious hypocrites the Scribes and Pharisees; in order to check that overweening pride, with which they exulted in their good-works over the sincere and humble penitence of the publican and sinner.

Our Saviour did not preach the same strictness of morals to *all*, as he did to his *immediate followers*. “ Behold one
 “ came and said unto him, *good master,*
 “ *what good thing shall I do to inherit*
 “ *eternal life ?*—And he said unto him,
 “ Why callest thou me good ? there is
 “ none good but one, that is God : but
 “ if thou wilt enter into life keep the
 “ Commandments.—He saith unto
 “ him, *which ?* Jesus said, Thou shalt
 “ do no murder, Thou shalt not com-
 “ mit adultery, Thou shalt not steal,
 “ Thou shalt not bear false witness ;
 “ Honour

“ Honour thy father and thy mother :
 “ and thou shalt love thy neighbour as
 “ thyself.”—

Every one of these commandments, we see, respects the discharge of the *social* duties incumbent on man in the present state of society. Not one is mentioned of a nature purely religious ; even the first commandment respecting the very acknowledgment of God is omitted : and yet Jesus says, keep these commandments and thou wilt enter into life.

The unattainable nature of moral *goodness* in this mortal state is also here strongly inculcated. “ There is none good but God *.”—And yet *so good*

* This passage has been urged in proof of our Saviour's giving up all pretensions to personal divinity. But the contrary is plain, on the slightest reflection. This Querist, who seems to have possessed all the spirit of the
 the

was the presuming Querist, that he answered, he had kept all these commandments from his youth up; pertly adding, “ what lack I yet ? ”—Jesus said unto him, “ if thou wilt be *perfect*, go, sell that thou hast, give it to the poor and follow me.”

This

the Pharisees, came, forsooth, with his “ good master,” in opposition to those humble believers, who saluted Jesus by the title of *Lord*; to which they had no need to add the epithet of *good*.—Our Saviour, who read the hearts of men, and never wanted shrewdness of *reply*, *questioned* him therefore, why, on the presumption he was addressing a *mere man*, he called him *good*, an epithet applicable only to *God*. So far, therefore, is this passage from making against our Saviour’s asserting his own divinity, it proves that he did so, in an instance, where, without any impeachment of his title, he might have neglected it.

This sacrifice of the things of this world, we see, was required of him, not as the conditions of his salvation, but as a proof of that moral perfection to which he pretended, and as a qualification necessary for him to become an immediate follower and disciple of Jesus Christ.

In like manner, we will venture to say, that Christianity, at this day, requires no purer morals in its professors, than as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, to keep those commandments which are essential to the good of society and the peace and happiness of mankind.

Let the sincere Christian do this and we believe he will enter into eternal life, even though he should be somewhat nice in regard to what he eats, drinks and wears ; though he should promote commerce, manufactures and
industry,

industry, yea, though he should, consistently with the laws of his country, resent insults, punish injuries, enter into the civil or even military service of government, draw his sword against the enemies of the state, and even fatally embroe it in blood, to chastise the insolence of unnatural rebellion !

S E C T. X.

On his reply to a fourth objection, "That
" if this revelation had really been
" from God, his infinite power and
" goodness could never have suffered
" it to have been so soon perverted
" from its original purity, to have
" continued in a state of corruption
" through the course of so many
" ages ; and at last to have proved
" so ineffectual to the reformation
" of mankind."—The manner, in
which

which this objection is attempted to be removed, shewn to reflect the highest indignity on the divine Author of the Christian religion, as well as on that religion itself.

IN answer to this *fourth* objection, our author very candidly and very simply replies, that on examination all this will be found inevitable.—We believe it; things could not possibly be otherwise, because such was the general design of Providence, and such the Christian dispensation, which was a part of it.

In reply to this objection, indeed, our author admits the whole force of it; which he endeavours to elude by a very simple expedient: much such another as that, by which he accounts elsewhere for the origin of evil. Necessity! hard necessity; which even the omnipotence of the Deity could not prevent!

prevent ! What is this but making the God of the Christians a mere heathen Jupiter, subject to the controul of superior Fate ?

He admits, that after Christianity had had made its way, by means of the preaching of the poor and mean, in holes and caverns, under the iron rod of persecution, till it so far prevailed as to obtain the countenance and protection of princes ; when kings became its patrons, and queens its nursing mothers ; he admits, we say, that it could no longer withstand the irresistible effects of the natural imperfection of man and the political evils of civil society. “ At length the meek and humble professors of the gospel inflaved these princes, and conquered these conquerors their patrons, and erected for themselves such a stupendous fabric of wealth and power, as the world “ had

“ had never seen : they then propa-
 “ gated their religion by the same me-
 “ thods by which it had been persecu-
 “ ted ; nations were converted by fire
 “ and sword, and the vanquished were
 “ baptised with daggers at their throats.”*

Horrid abominations ! exclaims our author at the enormities of the poor pagans. But what more horrid abominations could they be guilty of than these ? Were any of those, which, our author says, were practised in the pagan world, and vanished at the approach of Christianity, more horrid or more abominable ? And yet they were *permitted* it seems, because they could not be *prevented*. They proceeded, we are told, from a chain of causes and consequences, which could not have been broken without changing the established course of things by a constant series of

H miracles,

* See View, page 149.

miracles, or a total alteration of human nature.*

What a pity that a business which had so promising a beginning, should be so soon interrupted by such sinister and unforeseen accidents! For surely they must have been unforeseen, when the course of things was about to be established and human nature first constituted!

To be serious, this is a bungling excuse for a supposed blunder in the first outset of things, unless we seriously adopt the reason, our author deduces from revelation, *viz.* that it could not be otherwise, “because that all men
“should be exempted from sin and
“punishment is utterly repugnant to
“the universal system, and that constitution of things, which infinite wisdom has thought proper to *adopt.*”†

This

* See View, page 149.

† View, page 159.

This may be, but we revere the eternal councils of the great author and disposer of all things too much, to suppose he was ever under the predicament of *adopting* any measure or system of action, that resulted originally from any thing but his own will.

SECT. XI.

*On his reply to the fifth objection, “ The
 “ incredibility of some of its doc-
 “ trines, particularly those concern-
 “ ing the Trinity, and atonement
 “ for sin by the sufferings and death
 “ of Christ; the one contradicting
 “ all the principles of human reason,
 “ and the other all our ideas of na-
 “ tural justice.”—This objection shewn
 to be rather evaded than solved; the
 author not having fairly and fully stated
 the difficulties it really contains.*

TO these objections, says our author, " I shall only say, that no arguments founded on principles, which we cannot comprehend, can possibly disprove a proposition already proved on principles which we do understand ; and therefore that on this subject they ought not to be attended to." But this is rather evading the difficulty than solving it. Indeed, with regard to the doctrines of the Trinity and vicarious atonement he bestows on them some little attention. In respect to the former, he observes, " That three beings should be one being, is a proposition which certainly contradicts reason ; that is, *our* reason : but it does not thence follow, that it cannot be true ; for there are many propositions which contradict our reason, and yet are demonstrably true."

That

That this is a proposition contradictory to reason, we admit ; but we deny that it is either true or capable of demonstration. There may be propositions contradictory to reason, and yet not demonstrably false ; nay, they may be such as, however contradictory to reason, we cannot help believing to be true ; but to be demonstrably so, they must be perfectly and evidently consonant to reason ; for demonstration is nothing but the result of a complete process of rational argument.

That propositions *apparently* false are *demonstrably* true, is almost too notorious to merit illustration. Instances occur every moment in which the inference of our ill-informed and *immediate apprehension* is directly contradictory to that of a better-informed and *deliberate reflection*.

There are propositions, also, that require not only much deliberation, but much instruction, before our reason is qualified to pass any judgment concerning them. This our author elsewhere admits, * though, under the present head, he proceeds to support his assertion by example; offering an instance of the propositions, which, he says, are *contradictory to reason*, and yet *demonstrably true*. “ One, says he, is the very “ first principle of all religion, the being of a God; for that any *thing* “ should exist without a *cause*, or that “ any *thing* should be the *cause* of its “ own *existence*, are propositions equally “ contradictory to our reason; yet “ one of them must be true, or no- “ *thing* could ever have *existed*.”

The *Monthly* Reviewers very justly insinuate, that here is a confusion of terms:

* See Section XII.

terms : indeed our author here sadly exposes his want of logical precision.

—Not to cavil at his calling *God* a *thing*, his opposing the term *being*, or *existence* (instead of *effect*) to the term *cause*, is illogical in the highest degree.

All *created beings*, or *things*, are confessedly the EFFECTS of *one first CAUSE*; but we conceive this is the first time, so expert a logician ever made such a blunder as to put the *first* cause on a footing with *second* causes; and assert (as our author, in fact, does) that no *cause* could ever have existed that was not the *effect* of some *prior* cause. If he is not betrayed here into a flat denial of the existence of a God, or *first cause*, we know not what is such.

Our author palpably mistakes the permanent predicament of *existence* and *duration*, for the transitory one of *production* and *succession*. In the *former* the

terms *being* and *thing* are used with propriety : in the latter those of *cause* and *effect* with equal propriety : but it is a solecism in ratiocination to confound one with the other. For, though, in the order of nature *the existence* of one *thing* becomes the productive *cause* of *another*, the God of Nature, the primary, and efficient cause of all, superior to the work of his hands, * is ex-

* Some writers, indeed, and those of celebrity, have imagined a *scale* of beings, rising up from the meanest of God's creatures to the Creator himself ; but we always regarded this as groundless and visionary.

Thy pride, Lorenzo disbelieve ;
 Let Locke nor Addison deceive.
 For tho' creation's varied plan
 Assigns *degrees* respecting man ;

Yet

empted from the laws of subordination ; which he has prescribed as the regular succession of second causes and effects. It is, indeed, in our conception, a kind of metaphysical blasphemy to represent *God* as an *effect* which could not have existed without a *cause*, even though it be sheltered under the metaphysical absurdity of supposing that effect the cause of itself.

And yet our author proceeds with his examples ; “ In like manner, the “ over-ruling grace of the Creator, and

H 5 “ the

Yet humbly know, and learn to fear
God is beyond this mortal sphere !

Created beings, tho his care,
Doth he with them creation *share* ?

Oh ! no : the system all his own,
God, the creator, stands alone :

At equal distance all his plan,
The mite, the seraph, and the man !

EP. TO LOR.

“ the free-will of his creatures, his cer-
 “ tain foreknowledge of future events,
 “ and the uncertain contingency of
 “ those events, are to our apprehen-
 “ sions absolute contradictions to each
 “ other; and yet the truth of every
 “ one of these is demonstrable from
 “ Scripture, reason and experience.”

Here again our author confounds
 the *absolute* and *eternal* attributes of
 the *Creator* with the *relative* and *tempo-
 rary* properties of his *creatures*. That
 these should be *apparently* contradictory
 is no wonder: but that they are not,
 as our author affirms, *absolute* contra-
 dictions, is known to every man of
 sense and science, that hath bestowed
 sufficient attention on the subject; to
 whom these seeming contradictions
 must be easily reconcileable. The o-
 ver-ruling grace of the Creator is irre-
 sistible and positive; the free-will of
 his

his creatures resistible and comparative. The agency of man, compared with that of the Deity, is limited, confined, and servile. On the other hand, if compared with the agency of inferior animals, plants, &c. it is liberal and free.—The foreknowledge of the Deity is absolute and indisputable, as the succession of future events is with respect to him, fixed and unalterable; with respect to man, indeed, their contingency is as uncertain as is his want of foreknowledge, or ignorance, of their necessary succession.

All *Nature* is but *Art*, unknown to thee;
All *chance*, *direction*, which thou canst not see.

But to recur to the author's remarks on the doctrine of the Trinity. It is with propriety he observes, that "the
" difficulties with respect to our belief
" in this doctrine arise from our ima-
" gining, that the mode of existence

“ of all beings must be similar to our
 “ own ; that is, that they must all exist
 “ in space and time. Hence,” says
 he very justly, “ proceeds our embar-
 “ rassment on this subject. We know
 “ that no two beings, with whose
 “ mode of existence we are acquaint-
 “ ed, can exist in the same point of
 “ time, in the same point of space, and
 “ that therefore they cannot be one :
 “ but how far beings, whose mode of
 “ existence bears no relation to time
 “ and space, may be united, we can-
 “ not comprehend : and, therefore,
 “ the possibility of such an union we
 “ cannot positively deny.”

This is philosophical and just, but
 there is a wide difference between po-
 sitively denying a doctrine, and abso-
 lutely believing it.--Most certain,
 however, it is, that the doctrine of the
 Trinity, as it is taught by some of the
 Athanasians,

Athanasians, cannot possibly be believed by any human being. *

Our author reduces this formidable absurdity (for such it is, as some trinitarians represent it) to a mere simple proposition, as easy to be believed as that three equal angles or sides constitute one equilateral triangle. But this is not the case. In the exuberant and rattling eloquence of the famous Dr. Jeremy Taylor, the mystery of the Godhead is thus enigmatically displayed.—“ See what was to be taught, a
“ trinity

* By nonsense nor deceit misled
The honest heart and sober head ;
Some meaning, positive and plain,
A creed believ'd must needs contain :
A parrot else, if none deceive her,
A sound and orthodox believer ;
As much convinc'd as e'er was yet,
Your Athanasian paroquet !

EP. TO LOR.

“ trinity in the unity of the Godhead,
 “ τρία ἐν καὶ ἐν τρία; that is, the Christian
 “ arithmetic, *Three are one and one are*
 “ *three*. So Lucian in his *Philopatris*,
 “ or some other, decides the Christian
 “ doctrines; see *their* philosophy, *Ex*
 “ *nibilo nihil fit*.—No: *Ex nibilo omnia*,
 “ all things are made of nothing; and
 “ a *man-God* and a *God-man*, the same
 “ person *finite* and *infinite*, born *in time* and
 “ yet from *all eternity*, the son of God,
 “ but yet born of a woman, and she a
 “ *maid*, but yet a *mother*; resurrection
 “ of the dead, re-union of soul and
 “ body; this was part of the Christian
 “ physics or their natural philosophy.”*

With due deference to the authori-
 ty of this eminent divine, as well as to
 his

* See a Moral Demonstration of the Truth
 of the Christian Religion, first printed in
 the year 1660, lately reprinted for Cadell,
 page 53.

his late editor, Bishop Hurd, all this is merely declamatory. It is also so far sophistical, in that it is the Christian *theology* and not either *arithmetic* or *physics*.—The *mathematics* and *natural philosophy* of the *Christian* and the *Heathen* are the same: nor is it any impeachment to the *divinity* of *revelation*, that it has no place in the *cyclopædia*, or circle of human arts and sciences.

The case is, these writers do not make a proper distinction between a palpable contradiction in terms and an apparent contrariety in fact. There is also a necessary distinction to be made between the belief of the truth of a proposition (or the believing a proposition to be true) and the belief of the proposition itself: the former being consistent with an imperfect apprehension of its meaning; and the other consistent only with a clear and precise comprehension

comprehension as well of the predicate as of the subject.

From these distinctions arises a third, equally just and necessary, between the *faith* of the *Christian* and the *belief* of the *philosopher*. But of these distinctions more fully hereafter. *

SECT. XII.

On his reply to the sixth objection. "That,
 " however true these doctrines may
 " be, yet it must be inconsistent
 " with the justice and goodness of
 " the Creator, to require from
 " his creatures the belief of pro-
 " positions, which contradict, or
 " are above the reach of that rea-
 " son, which he has thought proper
 " to bestow on them." *This objec-*
tion

* See the following Section.

tion answered by denying that genuine Christianity requires any such belief.— The nature of the Christian faith investigated and its latitude defined: Christianity, as it requires nothing impracticable to be performed, so it requires nothing impossible to be believed.

TO this *sixth* objection, our author answers, “ Genuine Christianity requires no such belief.”

“ It has discovered to us many important truths, with which we were before entirely unacquainted, and amongst them are these, that three Beings are some way united in the divine essence, and that God will accept of the sufferings of Christ as an atonement for the sins of mankind. These, considered as declarations of facts only, neither contradict, or are above the reach of human

“ human reason : The first is a propo-
 “ sition as plain, as that three equila-
 “ ral lines compose one triangle *, the
 “ other is as intelligible, as that one
 “ man should discharge the debts of
 “ another. In what manner this union
 “ is formed, or why God accepts these
 “ vicarious punishments, or to what
 “ purposes they may be subservient, it
 “ informs us not, because no informa-
 “ tion could enable us to comprehend
 “ these mysteries, and therefore it
 “ does not require that we should know
 “ or believe any thing about them.”

How ! not *any thing about them* !
 Surely this is loosely and badly expres-
 sed ! As a declaration of fact merely,
 it has been already observed that the
 orthodox

* That *any three* lines might do, properly
 disposed, though *not equal* : indeed this allu-
 sion is by no means adequate, and but little
 pertinent.

orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is not so simple and rational as here laid down ; but much more complex and paradoxical.

As to the *quomodo* of the triunion, and the reason why God accepts of a vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind ; these are certainly beyond rational investigation, but Christians are doubtless required to believe so much about them, as that the facts are as possible as their declaration is true.

Again, if no information can enable us to comprehend these mysteries, it is not with very great propriety such important *truths* are said to be *discovered* by Revelation. The doctrines as mere declarations, indeed, may be said to be *discovered*, as they were not *divulged* before ; but if those doctrines themselves still remain mysterious, they would

would with more propriety be said to be simply declared or promulgated, than their *truth* to be *discovered*.

“The truth of these doctrines,” our author owns, “must rest intirely on
“the authority of those who taught
“them; but then, says he, we should
“reflect that those were the same persons who taught us a system of religion more sublime, and of ethics more
“perfect, than any which our faculties
“were ever able to discover; but
“which, when discovered, are exactly
“consonant to our reason; and that
“therefore we should not hastily reject
“those informations which they have
“vouchsafed to give us, of which our
“reason is not a competent judge.”

By the *truth of these doctrines*, he evidently means the *credibility* of them; but what he means by the *exact consonance* of those which are discovered
to

to our reason, we do not understand. It is from the want of such consonance, necessarily arising from the mysterious nature of such doctrines, that *we* deduce the incompetency of reason to judge of their truth.

But men, as our author justly observes, may very reasonably believe propositions to be true, of whose truth, nevertheless, they are no competent judges. "If an able mathematician," says he, "proves to us the truth of several propositions by demonstrations, which we understand, we hesitate not on his authority to assent to others, the process of whose proofs we are not able to follow: why therefore should we refuse that credit to Christ and his apostles, which we think reasonable to give to one another."

Why?

Why? indeed! It is very unreasonable: *they* doubtless deserve our credit.—But still we recur again to the *authenticity* of the *history* of the gospel and the *interpretation* of its doctrines. Admitting, therefore, the propriety of placing the utmost confidence in the veracity of Christ and his apostles, and that what they really meant to inculcate is worthy of all acceptance, still, we say, the cautious and candid Christian may, without the immediate direction of divine grace, remain at a loss what to believe.

As to what genuine Christianity *requires* us to believe; here again we plead for the same necessary latitude in matters of *faith*, as we have before done in *morals* *. Indeed, our author

* We call it a *necessary* latitude; because, to whatever purity of faith or morals *hypocrisy* may pretend, men always deceive

is, in this respect, and very justly, a latitudinarian too : for though he hath reduced the Christian's creed, as before observed, to a very small compass, he hath, by so doing, opened a wide field for scepticism. And yet so far are the dictates of genuine Christianity, even in our opinion, consonant with reason, that, as it requires nothing which is *impracticable* to be performed, so it requires nothing, which is *impossible* to be believed.

“ But how shall such a short-sighted
 “ Being as man know what is, or is
 “ not impossible ? ” — True ; he may be
 conscious of what is *impracticable*, as
 that

ceive themselves or others, when they affect to have a command, over their *reason* and *passions*, which they can derive from no resource either of Nature or Grace ; the only springs of human reflection and action

that regards himself, but he cannot prescribe impossibilities to God; of whose omnipotence he is no judge. To infinite power every thing is possible, except, indeed, inconsistency or self-contradiction. Every proposition, therefore, respecting the deity, that doth not involve a contradiction in terms, however improbable or *apparently* impossible, may yet be really possible, and therefore believed on proper evidence, powerful persuasion, or the influence of divine grace: whereas no kind or degree of evidence, no power of persuasion, no influence human or divine can possibly make any man believe a *contradiction in terms*.

This is one of those *impracticabilities* which respects himself. Of the *incompatibility* of *facts* he may not be a competent judge; but of the *incongruity* of his own *ideas*, he cannot but be sensible. To a direct contradiction-
in-

in-terms, therefore, he cannot give his unfeigned assent, though to the most egregious falsehood or palpable contrariety-in-fact, he may.

This distinction between a *contrariety-in-fact* and a *contradiction-in-terms*, we conceive, has not sufficiently been attended to. The one is popular, and physical ; consisting of natural inconsistency and moral improbabilities ; the other philosophical and logical, consisting of artificial inconsistencies and verbal incongruities. Hence, however incompetent human reason may be, to determine of possibilities in nature and probabilities in providence, it is competent to judge of the agreement and disagreement of its own ideas. Words, therefore, being the artificial signs of our ideas, a *contradiction-in-terms* becomes obviously and

I certainly

certainly discoverable, whilst a *contrariety-in-facts* is not.

The greatest falsehoods in fact, hence frequently pass for incontestible and demonstrable truths, on those who would immediately detect a direct contradiction in terms.—To illustrate this distinction by a familiar elucidation. A man as totally ignorant of the Copernican system as even the learned formerly were, might be told that the sun is much bigger than the earth and does not move round it every twenty-four hours, as it appears to do; the earth only moving imperceptibly round its own axis and carrying round with it every thing adhering to its surface with great rapidity.

An astronomer, we say, might tell an ignorant man this, who might either believe it, confiding in the astronomer's veracity, although it seemed

ed contrary to the evidence of his senses; or he might disbelieve and even deny it, confiding more in that evidence, he might say, "I cannot be persuaded out of my senses; I can see the size of the sun, and see it goes round the earth, which I also perceive stands all the while stock-still. It is impossible that I and every body about me should be whirled round with such velocity without our perceiving it."—If therefore, he should believe the astronomer's assertion, however true it be in reality, he would believe, what we call, a contrariety-in-fact, viz. that things really are, as he perceives they are not. The same illustration holds good respecting the existence of soul and body, matter and spirit, &c; of which, it is popularly supposed, we have positive proof or indubitable demonstration;

monstration; whereas we have nothing more than the imperfect evidence of our sensations and perceptions; which are so far from directly affording us demonstration of any thing, that they are constantly and egregiously deceiving us in almost every thing.

It will follow from the establishment of this distinction that, however justifiable men of discernment may be in their disbelief or denial of *inconsistent* or *self-contradictory propositions*, the very limited extent of their knowledge in the works of nature and the ways of providence, disqualifies them from taking upon them absolutely to deny improbable and even *apparently* impossible facts.

Another distinction, which here offers itself to our consideration, is *that*, between believing the truth of a doctrine (or the believing that a doctrine is

is

is true) and the belief of that doctrine itself.

For a man may very properly be said to believe the truth of a proposition (in other words, that such proposition is true) although the doctrine or declaration, it contains, appears doubtful, nay although the terms of such proposition be totally unintelligible: in which latter case he certainly cannot with any propriety be said to believe the proposition or doctrine itself.

The learned and ingenious author of a late plea for the divinity of Christ*, lays down in form, indeed, the following proposition: "The belief of a proposition does not necessarily imply a clear idea of the object of which the proposition affirms any thing." So that in this case a man may be said to

I 3

believe

* Mr Robinson:

believe a proposition he does not *understand*. But to this we cannot subscribe: a *clear* idea is certainly required as well of the *subject* as the *predicate*, though not a *full* or *adequate* idea. The idea entertained of God by a philosopher and that attached to the same term by an ignorant clown, are widely different: the one, magnificent and extensive as human science can teach or imagination conceive; the other mean and confined as ignorance and dulness can dictate. We will yet venture to say they are both equally *clear*; nay, we conceive the confined idea of the clown may be the clearest, as being more definite, in coming nearer the precision of our ideas of material objects. This very precision, indeed, is more destroyed by the effulgence of too much light than by the obscurity attending the want of it; even as the face of the moon

moon is seen clearer than that of the sun.

No doctrine or proposition, therefore, can, in our opinion, be actually believed, unless it be clearly understood ; and yet propositions which are not clearly understood, may not understood at all, may comprehend a truth, or may be true ; and “ that they do “ so,” is a proposition that may be believed.

A man may believe, as already observed, a contrariety in fact, a great falsehood, supported by competent evidence or credible affirmation ; so may he with equal propriety and on the same grounds believe the truth of a mysterious or even unintelligible proposition ; or that such a proposition is true.

But then this is not the proposition he believes ; this is quite a new one,

viz, "That the said mysterious or
 "unintelligible proposition is true,"
 which new proposition is neither my-
 sterious nor unintelligible, and there-
 fore may be believed †.

Thus a magistrate or officer who ad-
 ministers affidavits *ex officio* and knows
 not the contents, may, on the credit
 and veracity of the deponent, believe
 the truth of his deposition, or that
 the contents of such deposition are
 true; but he cannot with any pro-
 priety

† It has been frivolously objected that
 "a mathematician, who demonstrates the
 "truth of any proposition, does not *believe*
 "it to be true; he *knows* it to be so." True,
 he does not *only believe* it to be true, he does
more, he also *knows* it to be so; he believes
 not only the truth of the proposition, but
 the proposition itself. Knowledge includes
 belief, though belief does not include know-
 ledge.

priety be said to believe such affidavit itself or the contents of such deposition, because he knows not what those contents are and therefore can believe nothing about them.

These distinctions lead us naturally to a third, which, we flatter ourselves, may tend to conciliate the minds of polemical disputants ; or, at least, to abate their rancour, which too often prevails between the orthodox and heterodox in religious disputes : and this is the distinction, before hinted at, between the *faith* of the Christian and the *belief* of the *Philosopher*.

The former does not require a rational conviction of the proposition believed ; whereas the belief of a philosopher not only requires rational conviction, founded on positive evidence, but it requires also a clear and precise comprehension of all the terms of the

proposition laid down. On the contrary the unfeigned assent, or voluntary submission of reason, to the truth of a proposition, whose terms are not even perfectly understood, is sufficient to entitle a Christian to rank among the number of the faithful*. But a philosopher, who makes every thing submit to reason, cannot believe either that which he does not clearly conceive, or that of which he is not as clearly convinced.

Should he, as a man, be induced, by any means or motives, to give up the authority of his reason in matters where human reason is incompetent, he would do this, not as a *Philosopher*, but as a *Christian*, and of course be entitled to all the privileges and immunities attached to that character.

Of

* Agreeable to our author's description of the nature of faith, See page 79.

Of these our author has given an encouraging enumeration. — Unhappily for unbelievers, they require a proof of the truth of even those advantages, or, what would answer the same end, a belief or persuasion of their reality. There can be no doubt but this would be sufficient to make them immediately adopt an expedient, so admirably calculated to promote their ease and happiness. But whence is such belief or persuasion to be derived? From reason? Surely not; unless the truth of the Christian religion could be much more rationally proved than by, what this writer calls, demonstration.

But what, we ask again, is demonstration? And what is its influence? Intuition is not demonstration; instinct is not demonstration; perception

is not demonstration, nor is conceit demonstration; and yet intuitive or instinctive impulse, the force of imagination or firm persuasion, may have equal influence on the mind, with that of the clearest demonstration.

This influence, however, is of another kind; and, though it be not rational, it has often a greater effect over even rational creatures than the most clear and precise of rational deductions. We experience *this*, even in the common concerns of life: in the more *uncommon*, the force of inclination and the power of imagination, are so notoriously known to overpower the strongest of our reasoning faculties, that it were absurd to support the credit of demonstration in cases, where even demonstration itself must give way to prejudice and prepossession.—And if to prejudice and prepossession, surely
to

to the operation of Grace, and the influence of divine inspiration!

That something more than the mere exercise of reason, or even a good-will, or inclination to believe, appears necessary from our author's own confession.

“There are people,” says he, “who from particular motives have determined with themselves, that a pretended revelation founded on so strange and improbable a story, so contradictory to reason, so adverse to the world and all its occupations, so incredible in its doctrines, and in its precepts so impracticable, can be nothing more than the imposition of priestcraft upon ignorant and illiterate ages, and artfully continued as an engine well-adapted to awe and govern the superstitious vulgar. To talk to such about the Christian

“ Christian religion, is to converse
 “ with the deaf concerning music, or
 “ with the blind on the beauties of
 “ painting : They want all ideas rela-
 “ tive to the subject, and therefore can
 “ never be made to comprehend it;
 “ to enable them to do this, their
 “ minds must be formed for these con-
 “ ceptions by contemplation, retire-
 “ ment, and abstraction from business
 “ and dissipation, by ill-health, disap-
 “ pointment, and distresses ; and pos-
 “ sibly by *divine interposition*, or by en-
 “ thusiasm, which is usually mistaken
 “ for it. Without some of these pre-
 “ paratory aids, together with a com-
 “ petent degree of learning and appli-
 “ cation, it is impossible that they can
 “ think or know, understand or be-
 “ lieve, any thing about it. If they
 “ profess to believe, they deceive o-
 “ thers ; if they fancy that they be-
 “ lieve

" lieve, they deceive themselves. I am
 " ready to acknowledge, that these
 " gentlemen, as far as their informa-
 " tion reaches, are perfectly in the
 " right; and if they are endued with
 " good understandings, which have
 " been entirely devoted to the business
 " or amusements of the world, they
 " can pass no other judgment, and
 " must revolt from the history and
 " doctrines of this religion. 'The
 " preaching Christ crucified was to the
 " Jews a stumbling-block, and to the
 " Greeks foolishness;' * and so it must
 " appear to all, who, like them, judge
 " from established prejudices, false
 " learning, and superficial knowledge;
 " for those who are quite unable to
 " follow the chain of its prophecy, to
 " see the beauty and justness of its mo-
 " ral precepts, and to enter into the
 " wonders

“ wonders of its dispensations, can
 “ form no other idea of this revelation
 “ but that of a confused rhapsody of
 “ fictions and absurdities.”

This is saying a great deal in discredit of a revelation, whose divine origin is so obvious, and whose doctrines are so reasonable as our author pretends. Surely there are no men, of *good understandings*, so *entirely* devoted to the business or amusements of the world, as to be *quite unable* to form any other idea of revelation than that it is a confused rhapsody of fictions and absurdities.

Granting, indeed, it be so, and that the pursuits of this world are so totally incompatible with the things of the next; it surely affords a strong argument that reason is an incompetent judge in *every thing* relative to the system, and that nothing but divine inspiration

piration can effectually inculcate the dictates of divine revelation !

The admitting that *possibly divine interposition* may be necessary to prepare *some* persons for believing the truths of the Christian religion, is, in fact, admitting that to be true in a degree, and in particular cases, which we contend for altogether and universally.

We are sorry, however, to find such *divine interposition* put on a footing with *ill-health*, disappointment, distress and even enthusiasm.

Not that we conceive the mode of that interposition to be confined to unaccountable impulse or miraculous conversion. Natural means may in this case be made the forerunners of supernatural effects ; nay we will not deny that even enthusiasm, or a *false* inspiration itself, may be made the harbinger of the *true*.

Through

Through even the *foolishness of preaching* were unbelievers formerly converted. Learning and study, also, may be made the concomitant means of grace; but we do not conceive they are essentially necessary to give efficacy to other means or to divine interposition itself. If they were, it would not appear that God had chosen the foolishness of this world to confound the wise. It would rather be the subjecting of divine wisdom to human sagacity, and the excluding from Christianity all but learned divines and profound philosophers.

“ And yet,” says our author, “ if it
 “ be asked, was Christianity intended
 “ only for these? I answer, No: It
 “ was at first preached by the illiterate,
 “ and received by the ignorant; and to
 “ such are the practical, which are the
 “ most necessary parts of it, sufficient-
 ly

ly intelligible : but the proofs of
 its authority undoubtedly are not,
 because these must be chiefly drawn
 from other parts, of a speculative
 nature, opening to our inquiries in-
 exhaustible discoveries concerning
 the nature, attributes, and dispensa-
 tions of God, which cannot be un-
 derstood without some learning and
 much attention. From these the
 generality of mankind must necessa-
 rily be excluded, and must there-
 fore trust to others for the grounds
 of their belief, if they believe at all.

“ And hence,” continues he, “ per-
 haps it is, that faith, or easiness of
 belief, is so frequently and so strong-
 ly recommended in the gospel ; be-
 cause *if men require* proofs, of which
 they themselves are incapable, and
 those who have no knowledge
 on this important subject will not
 place

“ place some confidence in those who
 “ have ; the illiterate and unattentive
 “ must ever continue in a state of un-
 “ belief.”

Our author here seems to have run away from his argument ; the faith recommended in the gospel and therefore *required* of Christians by *God*, may be widely different from that *required* by *men* either of themselves or of others ; and, of course, the *requisite proofs* of the doctrines believed, may be different also.

We cannot admit, therefore, this necessity of any man's pinning his faith on his neighbour's sleeve. The most ignorant and illiterate man is no farther removed from God, or incapable of receiving the illuminations of grace, than the greatest philosopher or the most learned divine. So that if men are content with believing only
 what

what God requires of them, as necessary to salvation, they may safely rely on him and the ordinary means of providence for instruction.

The case is different with those, who, to gratify even a laudable curiosity, are inquisitive about circumstances and doctrines unessential to salvation. The object of that curiosity is a worldly object, and, if attained, must be attained by worldly means. They who possess not the means of original pursuit, therefore, must be content, as a certain author expresses it, "to receive the object of it at second hand : but the faith necessary to salvation is no such *stale bargain*, it is the *immediate gift* of God."

Our author would have the inattentive and illiterate receive this gift at the hands of *man* ; and, because uninformed reason is not to be depended on in matters

matters of faith, he advises them to
 rest their dependence on the informa-
 tion of those, who professedly deduce
 what they know from the exercise of
 their reason. "They," says he, "that
 "is the inattentive and illiterate,
 "should all remember, [*what perhaps*
 "*they never knew*] that in all sciences,
 "even in mathematics *themselves* [*itself*]
 "there are many propositions, which
 "on a cursory view appear to the most
 "acute understandings, uninstructed in
 "*that science*, to be impossible to be
 "true, which yet on a closer examina-
 "tion are found to be truths capable
 "of the strictest demonstration; and
 "that therefore in disquisitions on
 "which we cannot determine without
 "much learned investigation, reason
 "uninformed is by no means to be
 "depended on; and from hence they
 "ought surely to conclude, That it
 "may

“ may be at least as possible for them
 “ to be mistaken in disbelieving this
 “ revelation, who know nothing of
 “ the matter, as for those great masters
 “ of reason and erudition, Grotius,
 “ Bacon, Newton, Boyle, Locke,
 “ Addison, and Lyttleton, to be de-
 “ ceived in their belief : a belief, to
 “ which they firmly adhered after the
 “ most diligent and learned researches
 “ into the authenticity of its records,
 “ the completion of the prophecies,
 “ the sublimity of its doctrines, the
 “ purity of its precepts, and the argu-
 “ ments of its adversaries ; a belief,
 “ which they have testified to the
 “ world by their writings, without any
 “ other motive, than their regard for
 “ truth and the benefit of mankind.”

In a matter of so great importance,
 we pay no authority even to great
 names. Without uncharitably ques-
 tioning

tioning, however, either the sincerity or the motives of the several avowed defenders of Christianity, certain it is that *some* of them have been secretly contemners of its doctrines and privately disbelievers of its divine original.

It is, indeed, justly to be suspected that the number of these, is much greater than is generally imagined; for, however widely religious infidelity may have spread itself, moral hypocrisy hath, in the present age, kept pace with it.

Religious masquerading hath, in fact, become so general and unbelievers so numerous that, they keep one another in countenance, while, with unparalleled effrontery they take off the mask and openly belie the characters they assume. Thus our modish Christians wear the plain face of downright heathens,

thens, while they retain the domino, or outward garb of Christianity.

This they do, by explaining away, as our author observes, the plain and obvious meaning of scripture and modelling the articles of faith agreeable to their own imagination. And yet these very underminers of genuine Christianity, who are daily sapping its foundation and preying on its vitals, keep flourishing away with their misrepresentations of its prosperous and flourishing state.

“ If Christianity,” say certain bold Reviewers, in their critique on the pamphlet before us, “ had been an
 “ imposture, it could never have
 “ maintained its credit for almost
 “ eighteen hundred years, or stood the
 “ test of the most acute and accurate
 “ examinations of friends and enemies,
 “ of wits and infidels, critics and phi-

K losophers

“losophers of all denominations; some
 “fundamental defect, some irrecon-
 “cileable contradiction, or some gross
 “absurdity must have been discovered.
 “But this is so far from being the
 “case, that the more it is considered
 “the more it convinces; every new
 “enquiry produces new light, new
 “evidence, and from every fresh at-
 “tack it gains an additional tri-
 “umph.”

What an impudent abuse of the
 good faith of the Christian reader!
 what an insolent attempt to impose on
 his credulity!

Do not these very critics themselves
 pretend to have discovered fundamental
 defects, irreconcilable contradictions,
 and gross absurdities in the primitive
 and orthodox tenets of Christianity?
 Do they not ridicule the doctrine of
 the Trinity? Do they not deny the
 Divinity

Divinity of our Saviour ? Do not they reject the tenets of vicarious atonement, justification by faith, and almost every essential article in the Christian creed ? And do they still pretend that the mutilation of its very being, is gaining additional triumphs to its cause ? Shame on such barefaced irony * !

* We should not think it worth while to notice here even this gross misrepresentation of things, by *such* anonymous critics ; as they are at present sunk deservedly so low in the general esteem of the public : but, as they have heretofore stood in much higher estimation, and persons, ignorant of their degeneracy, might put the same confidence in them as formerly, we think a land-mark should be placed on the accumulating shoal, lest the unwary mariner should suppose himself in a *deep* when he is barely floating on a *shallow*.

The real state of the case is quite otherwise : genuine Christianity, notwithstanding the vapouring of these nominal Christians, being never at so low an ebb as it is among our modern rationalists ; surviving chiefly among those who are ridiculed as contemned visionaries, enthusiasts and fanatics. The truth is that, so far has pure Christianity been from profiting by the freedom of enquiry, with which its doctrines have of late years been treated, that it has really lost ground among all the advocates for such enquiry.

It

If any of their old friends are desirous to remain undeceived, we leave them to make their own discovery ; in which case they will find themselves much in the situation of Sancho Pancha, when, his ass being stolen from under him, while he was asleep, he waked and found himself mounted merely on a pack-saddle.

It is an idle boast that a mere belief in the mysteries of religion will stand the test of ridicule and defy the powers of rational investigation. Those mysteries themselves will undoubtedly do it, because they depend not on the credulity or credibility of men, but on the unchangeable promises of God. But we see daily the most plausible professional characters laughed out of their religion, and even the warmest zealots argued out of their zeal *. So that if we were to calculate, to how small a number of people genuine Christianity is at present confined, we shall have no reason to boast, with this author, the extent of its propagation and influence; and still much less to advance it as a proof of its divine original †.

* *Ridicule*, though not the test of *truth*, is thus often the test of our adherence to it.

† It must be owned, indeed, that our author does not much boast of its *present*

Happily for Christianity it hath a much firmer support in the promises of its divine author, than in any rational arguments that can be produced from such circumstances : and happily for real Christians their faith hath a more unfailing resource in the operations of divine grace, than in the most fertile expedients of human reason.

state. Comparing it with the *ancient*, he says, “ If it is asked, why should not the belief “ of the same religion now produce the same “ effect ? the answer is short, because it is “ not believed :” VIEW page 156. The writer’s meaning is plain, though not accurately expressed, unless an *indirect* answer only was intended to the question.

SECT.

S E C T. XIII.

On his reply to the seventh objection.

“ That the whole scheme of Revelation is partial, false, fluctuating, unjust, and unworthy of an omniscient and omnipotent Author.”

THIS objection is conveyed in such diffuse and desultory terms that it amounts to little more than what has before been urged, viz. that the whole is incredible and bears no internal evidence of its divine original.

And, indeed, if we suppose human reason to be a competent judge of the *divinity* of Revelation, and also of what is *worthy* or *unworthy* an omniscient and omnipotent Being, the objection stands in its full force.

But we deny this competence, as indeed does our author, who observes that though "Reason is undoubtedly
 "our surest guide in matters which
 "lie within the narrow circle of her
 "intelligence," she is greatly deficient when she proceeds farther.

"God, says this self-sufficient teacher [reason] is perfectly wise, just and
 "good; and what is the inference?
 "That all his dispensations must be
 "conformable to our notions of perfect wisdom, justice and goodness:
 "but it should be first proved that
 "man is as perfect, and as wise as his
 "Creator, or this consequence will by
 "no means follow *:

But, says our author on the subject of revelation, her province is only to examine into its authority, and when that is once proved, she has no more to do but to acquiesce in its doctrines?—

We

* See View, p. 175.

We have before hinted that we think reason has at least as much to do in the one case as in the other ; we shall now, therefore, only observe, on this head, that the *Monthly* Reviewers conceive it to be a very unguarded and dangerous position. “ It precludes,” say they, “ and discourages all rational inquiry *.

Doubtless it does and properly, all rational inquiry on a subject that does not admit of rational inquiry.

But, say they, “ if it were pursued “ it would justify the wildest enthusiasm or superstition.”—How ! will an acquiescence, or the putting an implicit faith, in the *doctrines* of the scripture, lead to the wildest enthusiasm and superstition ? Is the human mind, when directed by divine revelation,

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more

* *Monthly* Review, for June 1776. p. 472.

more apt to err, than when under the simple influence of reason ? *

We have already observed that, in our opinion, it is the duty of Christians to submit the dictates of reason, as well with respect to the authority of the scriptures, as the truth of its doctrines, to the influence of divine grace ; and it would be but modest, in our rival Reviewers, to leave to the author of the foundation of our faith the care of its superstructure.

They may rest assured that, whatever extravagancies of enthusiasm or superstition men have fallen into, it has not arisen from their putting an implicit

* These learned and ingenious gentlemen (if indeed any gentleman, ingenious or learned, *still continues* to write in the *Monthly Review*) seems to think that *Reason* has *still wilder imaginations* than those imputed to it by our author.

cit faith in the doctrines of scriptures (in other words, from their submitting their reason to revelation) but to their indulging, in the pride of their hearts, the wantonness of their imagination and trying their *reasonable practices* on such doctrines.

S E C T. XIV.

General Reflections on the whole argument, and conclusion in favour of universal candour, in judging of the faith and morals of others, or the exertion of Christian charity toward all mankind.

HAVING thus assigned our reasons for thinking the human understanding a very incompetent judge either of the mysteries of our holy religion, or of the proof of its divine origin; we

shall add only a few cursory reflections respecting the state of the argument in general :

And first let us observe that were we disposed to take away even the slightest prop, on which the popular belief of revelation rests, we might expose to the greatest ridicule those vain boastings of vaunting casuists, who, declaring the truths of christianity to be fit objects of rational investigation, invite the attacks of argument, wit, and ridicule, and boldly bid them defiance. Among these we may particularize, as of late the most eminent and conspicuous, that ingenious and justly celebrated philosopher, Dr. Joseph Priestly and his very able coadjutors in the theological repository.

It was with a very bad grace, also, the celebrated author of the *Divine Legation*

Legation made a similar boast and threw out the same defiance against the free-thinkers ; while the civil power was actually up in arms to crush one of, the dullest, and inoffensive insects of the whole tribe ; poor old Peter Annet ! It was certainly a glorious triumph over infidelity and a fine proof of the clerical faith in the impregnability of the Christian church, the getting a decrepid dotard of eighty, sentenced to be imprisoned in Newgate, pilloried in the public streets, and condemned to beat hemp in Bridewell for a twelve-month ; and all merely for pushing a few pitiful pellets, out of the pop-gun of his wretched goose-quill, against the credibility, of the Mosaic history of the plagues of Egypt !

Why was not the artillery of the ecclesiastical fortrefs levelled at some more formidable foe ? in their opposition

fition to whom those doughty engineers might have reaped some credit for their valour (if not for their conduct) and have at least escaped the odium, which ever falls on *cowards* for their *cruelty*!

They may rest, however, secure: the ashes of poor Peter will remain quiet in his grave. We dare say there was not so much spirit buried with them, as to cause any future disturbance either to him or them!*

The dignified ecclesiastic abovementioned has been bold enough to say, in some of his prefaces, that the free-thinkers (as they are falsely stiled) have

* We are assured that a late Archbishop of Canterbury thought the punishment of this poor man so much greater than his crime, that he allowed him a stipend for life, after he had submitted to, and undergone, the sentence of the law.

have had fair-play in the argument ? that they have been left at liberty to handle the weapons of offence and defence at pleasure, and yet have been foiled.

But this is not true. The *free-thinkers* never had fair-play given them, nor in fact do they deserve it, if it were prudent, in the civil magistrate, to indulge them. They are, in general, as little actuated by candour and the love of truth, as their antagonists are by the detestation of falsehood ; and it must be owned of the *latter*, they do, for the most part, love a *little deception* DEARLY !

The writer of this critique can as truly aver his sincerity as the author of the pamphlet, which is the subject of it. He can truly say that, with the most ardent desire of reconciling revelation to reason, he long and laboriously

iously attached himself to the study of the scriptures and the reading of the commentators: that, with the most earnest wish to find the doctrines of christianity true, and its divine origin morally evident, he attended with the utmost candour, to the authorities of ancient historians and the arguments of modern reasoners.

And yet, though early instructed to pay the most profound reverence and put the most implicit faith in the orthodox doctrines of Christianity, the more closely he applied the criterion of reason the more clearly did that criterion appear to be inapplicable. The farther advances he made in human science the less compatible he found it with divine knowledge.

He felt, by no means, the force of argument respecting the divine mission of our Saviour, either from the completion

completion of prophecies or the effect of miracles. The history of the former seemed too problematical and legendary, while the latter appeared to have had much less effect, than they might reasonably be supposed to have, on the very persons who were eye-witnesses of them.

It appeared to him that the credit of Christianity was so little established, and even the name of its divine institutor so little known, in its very birth-place and infancy, that the magistrates themselves speak of *one Jesus* *, as of

* Acts, xxv. 19. It is true that this depreciating mode of expression is used by Festus, a new governor just come into office; but it does not appear that King Agrippa himself, whom Paul compliments with being expert in all customs and questions then among the Jews, knew any thing more of *this Jesus* than the governor. Paul, indeed, would

an obscure and unheard-of stranger ;
and of his sacrifice on the cross, as a
doubtful event.

It appeared to him that if there
were any thing supernatural in the
propagation of Christianity, it lay in
its subsequent progress in opposition
to the incredulity of the times, and the
inefficacy of the miracles of Christ
and his apostles to diffuse a more ge-
neral and earlier belief. Next to this
he conceived the strongest proof that
could

would fain have persuaded him that he
knew much more of the matter than he
did, or at least would seem to do : he could
not persuade him, however, to acknow-
ledge himself a Christian, when he was not.
For that seems to be the true meaning of
the passage, as it seems the boldness and
artfulness of the insinuation, caused Agrip-
pa to get up and walk away.

could be brought of the divine origin, and of a supernatural interposition in the establishment of Christianity, is that the enormous wickedness of its later professors, the flagitious, the inhuman methods of propagating it, together with the apparent absurdities, contained in its mysterious tenets, have not been able to bring it altogether into discredit even in the most scientific ages and with the most rational and humane nations of the world.

Here is, indeed, the appearance of something supernatural; the fulfilling of the divine founder's promise to the Christian church that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It is to an over-ruling providence and the irresistible power of grace in the completion of this promise, as before observed, more than to the strongest rational

al arguments, that Christianity owes its permanence and protection.

Depended its sacred mysteries on the force of *reason*, what can be more *rational*ly advanced in defence of the incarnation of *Jesus*, than of the incarnations of *Vishnou*? Depended they on *rational* arguments in favour of their *truth*? What could *reasonably* be said in favour of a *God*, the author of *life*, becoming subject to *mortality*? To his being *born*, of a *woman*, though *not* *begot* by a *man*? To his *dying* the death of a *sinner* to *atone* for the *sins* of the *saints*, to his descending into hell, and his ascending again to heaven, to *reassume*, after all, the pristine glory of the Deity!

If there be any thing, in any religion, more revolting to human reason than this, we are unacquainted with the

the greatest *apparent* absurdities in the known world.

If we are asked then, whether as *mere rational* beings, we can believe such propositions? we frankly answer, no.—And yet, experimentally convinced how short is the line of the human understanding, how inadequate the strongest powers of sense and genius to penetrate the veil of nature and of providence, we can readily submit our reason to revelation, and give our unfeigned assent, as *Christians*, to the truth of propositions, which, as *men* and *philosophers*, we can neither fully understand nor clearly conceive.—Believing though not on any rational conviction, that *faith*, or as our author properly describes it, an assent to the essential doctrines of Christianity, is a religious duty enjoined every man, who lives under the dispensation of the
gospel

gospel, we believe, even as *men*, so much of them as we comprehend; persuaded that even what we do not comprehend, would command our belief, if we did, in the same proportion.

We can unfeignedly do this, even while the *truth*, as it is called, of such mysterious propositions appears doubtful, nay while even the terms of such propositions appear in part or altogether unintelligible.

It is a favorite maxim with our modern rationalists (or as some call them *divines*) that “where mystery “begins religion ends.” This maxim is, in our opinion, so far from being applicable to the *Christian* religion, that we think the *faith* of the Christian applicable chiefly to its mysteries, with which it begins and ends.

There

There would, indeed, be something mysterious in the promulgation even of the *morals* of Christianity, if we could be brought to believe the practice of them in their declared *purity* to be in our present state required of us ; a practice so diametrically opposite to the gratification of the appetites and passions of human nature, and even to the laws of justice and equity admitted in natural religion.

“ To submit to every insult, to return good for evil, to love those that hate us, and wish well to them that despitefully use us,” are tenets so contrary as well to our natural impatience of injuries as to our ideas of natural justice, that, however the meek-spirited and grace-endowed individual may adopt them in private practice, no community of Christians ever yet dared

dared to admit them into their system of civil policy.

As to the *Faith* of the Christian if it be not exercised on the mysteries of his religion, we see neither use nor merit in his belief. If he believe nothing but what appears rational and probable, nothing but what is evinced by a cloud of witnesses, and carries with it the clearest conviction, in what is it more meritorious than the creed of the skeptic or infidel? for even *they* have their *creed*.

“ Because thou hast seen me (saith our Saviour to Didymus) thou hast believed, & blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

We think this text perfectly applicable to such as, like our author, are anxious to prove the divine authority of the Scriptures by rational argument: in doing which, we think
them

them just as ill employed as, this writer says, they would be in pretending to accommodate the scriptural doctrines to our natural ideas of rectitude and truth.

The well-disposed reader, therefore, submitting his *Reason* to *Revelation*, and his belief of its divine origin, as well as of its essential doctrines, to a superior mode of conviction, the influence of Grace, would do well patiently to wait the effect of its operation in God's own place and time, and not be importunately anxious for the elucidation of obscurities, which nothing but divine illumination can illustrate.

For, after all, what men generally mean by the *truth* of the doctrines of revelation, is their consonance or congruity with the deductions of common-sense and mere unenlightened reason.

L

The

The truly-devout need be under no apprehension of being guilty of a neglect of religious duty, in thus patiently-waiting for that inspiration from above, which only can, make them wise unto salvation.

In the mean time, they should not be surprized nor alarmed at finding their notions of divine truths not exactly to coincide with those of other men, of whose talents, gifts or graces, they may entertain a higher opinion than they do of their own.

As there are few, if any, persons in the world, that either hear, see or feel external objects exactly alike (our nervous systems being as diversified as our features) so there are as few that conceive exactly alike the meaning of any one moral or religious proposition ; even divine inspiration itself accommodating

dating its influence to the different faculties of the individual.

This reflection, above all others, should excite us to the exercise of that Christian charity, which, covering a multitude of sins, we should throw, as a veil of universal candour, over the mistakes and errors of the rest of mankind; justly suspecting that, with regard to others more enlightened than ourselves, we may stand in need of the same indulgence.

THE END.

5567

REASON AND GRACE,

THEOLOGICAL APOLOGUE.*



DO Christian Heathens still complain,
That *infidels* our creed profane ;
Yet harbour doubts so dark and nice
They were in infidels a vice ?
Religion, do they still pretend,
Where *mystery* begins, must end ;
And yet affect in *revelation*
To trace the means of man's salvation ?—

O'er error let the truth prevail,
The truth, though treated as a tale.

High on th' imperial throne of grace,
Where angels view their Maker's face,
(As, fondly in imagination
Men give him local habitation,
Tho' nature's universal mind
By time and place is unconfined)

Through

* The reader, who has not been offended at the few verses, quoted in the foregoing pages, will not be displeased at the insertion of this apologue, first prefixed to the fourth edition of the epistles to Lorenzo before-mentioned.

Through clouds, that canopy his throne,
 Seen by the eye of faith alone,
 Conceal'd the Christian Deity
 Sat veil'd in awful mystery!

With anxious heart and listening ear,
 Alternate slave to hope and fear,
Devotion blind, a pagan bred,
 To visionary notions led,
 With spirits of fantastic birth
 Had pester'd heav'n and peopled earth.

In ev'ry stream, thro' ev'ry grove,
 Did nayad swim or dryad rove;
 On ev'ry whirlwind terrour rode,
 And spoke the presence of a god;
 His breast with human passions fraught,
 As folly dreamt or error taught;
 Till cautious *reason* scarce could tell
 The gods of *heav'n* from those of *hell*.

'Twas now the one true God, supreme,
 Dispersing darkness like a dream,
 From heav'n directed *revelation*,
 Beneath the Christian dispensation,
 Those truths to teach; which, left alone
 To *reason*, MAN had never known:
 For 'tis by different means we trace

The

The works of *nature* and of *grace* ;
 Degen'rate minds in contradiction
 Full oft from rational conviction !

Yet *Reason*, piqu'd with envious pride,
 At sight of this transcendent guide,
 Affected much to scorn her aid
 And scoff'd at the celestial maid ;
 As if, by simple nature given
 The special privilege of heaven ;
 Whence they, who gospel-truths believe,
 The same implicitly receive ;
 By *grace* intuitively taught,
 Without the aid of puzzling thought,
 Without the use of studied rules,
 Without the logic of the schools ;
 Without the means, that *art* supplies,
 Or *science*, making blockheads wise !

For human wisdom here at fault,
 Its solemn forms are set at nought ;
 While thro' the wide world's narrow bounds,
 Mere foolishness the wise confounds.
 In heaven's own manner, time and place,
 Hence Christians wait the call of grace ;
 Whose operation, from on high,
 Nor wit, nor learning can supply.

The

The *skeptic* yet, devoutly vain
 Because he bows at nature's fane,
 Tho' ne'er the unregen'rate mind,
 May *nature's* God behold enshrin'd,
 Persists, with scrutinizing eye,
 By logic gospel-truth to try ;
 To make the sapience of the sage
 The standard of the sacred page ;
 And take, for heaven, in worldly pride,
 A carnal, for a spiritual, guide.

Hence each, by *reasoning* led astray,
 Perversely takes a different way ;
 Tho' o' the same chart, they all pretend,
 Directs them to their journey's end.

Cease, ye discordant skeptics cease ?
 The *gospel* is the word of *peace* :
 Its *myst'ries* taught the human race
 Alone by heav'n-inspiring *grace*.

The *sophist*, poring in the dark,
 Still syllogizes wide the mark ;
 The *Christian* takes the book in hand,
 And where he may not understand,
 Nor hesitates, nor blindly pores ;
 But reads, believes, admires, adores !

The diff'rence then, with me, admit ;

Betwixt

Betwixt *divine* and *human* wit :

This but for this world's purpose given,

That to direct the way to heaven.

. To Cæsar pay great Cæsar's due,
And take his coin for sterling true ;
But dig not Cæsar's richest mine,
To mix its ore with gold divine ;
Lest worse designing Christian-Jews
The dangerous precedent abuse,
Adulterate with new allay,
And clip and sweat it all away. *

* It has been objected that this apprehension is groundless, if the scriptural promises respecting the stability of the Christian church, are to be depended on. But this objection is founded on misapprehension. A particular people may forfeit, thro' infidelity, their title to that church, without affecting its general stability or prosperity, as experience hath evinced. There cannot, also, be a more fatal prognostic of Christianity's forsaking any country than its being reduced to a mere *name* among its pretended professors ; for such, we presume, is the *paganized* Christianity, as Bishop W. calls it ; prevailing in the present day.

between these two states
The first of these is the
The second is the
The third is the
The fourth is the
The fifth is the
The sixth is the
The seventh is the
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The first of these is the
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The fourteenth is the
The fifteenth is the
The sixteenth is the
The seventeenth is the
The eighteenth is the
The nineteenth is the
The twentieth is the

ERRATA.

Page 6. Note, line 2. for *France, having*, read
France. Having.

P. 20. Note, line 6. for *expence*, read *experience*.

P. 78. line 10. for *dubious*, read *diffident*.

P. 83. line 1. for *the man* read *that the man*.

P. 97. Note, line 5. for *farce* read *function*.

P. 124. line 17. for *mankind*, read *man*.

lines 19. and 20. transpose the Comma
from *of*, to *controuling*.

P. 175. line *ult.* for *this* read *that*.

P. 213. line 1. for *greatest* read *the greatest*.

THE
REMARKS,
ON
MR. JENYNS'S ENQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE AND ORIGIN OF EVIL,

Advertised to be annexed to the foregoing
Observations, will be inserted in the next
number of the *London Review*.

